OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro* GAMER



AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | NEO GEO | SONY | COIN-OP | MOBILE

THE SCARIEST MOMENTS OF ALL TIME

FROM ALIENS TO RESIDENT EVIL: HOW MANY HAVE SHOCKED YOU?



GAMING OBSESSIONS

DISCOVER WHY GAMERS BUILD HUGE VIDEOGAME COLLECTIONS

WORLDS APART

SEGA SATURN

CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF SEGA'S OUT-OF-TOUCH 32-BIT CONSOLE

OFFICIAL retroGAMER SEAL OF QUALITY



DESERT STRIKE

ALL THE BEST BITS FROM EA'S CLASSIC SHOOTER



ALSO INSIDE

- ONI
- WASTELAND
- WARIOWARE
- ORIGIN SYSTEMS
- MEDAL OF HONOR
- RETRO CITY RAMPAGE

ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING
DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 134

BATMAN: A LEGACY

WE SPEAK TO THE DEVELOPERS BEHIND THE CAPED CRUSADER'S GREATEST ADVENTURES



THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE SATURN GAME



DARRAN JONES

NiGHTS!, no wait, *Radiant Silvergun… Guardian Heroes… Bomberman… Sega Ages… Panzer Dragoon Saga…* Aaarrggh!

Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine

Currently playing:
Aeroblasters

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



NICK THORPE

I love *Fighters Megamix* – it works great in either *Fighting Vipers* or *Virtua Fighter* style, and looks stunning.

Expertise:
Owning seven Master Systems

Currently playing:
Danganronpa 2: Goodbye Despair

Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog



PAUL DRURY

Saturn *Bomberman* in all its ten-player glory. I always look out for it at retro shows and get this warm fuzzy feeling, knowing that someone has managed to get ten pads together in one place.

Expertise:
Letting the side down in *Destiny*

Currently playing:
Food Fight

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



STEVE HOLMES

I played *FIFA 98: Road To The World Cup* on three different platforms, so I'll go for that. At 23 I've actually spent over half my life playing *FIFA*. Is that a waste?

Expertise:
Saying goodbye

Currently playing:
Dark Souls (yet again)

Favourite game of all time:
The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time



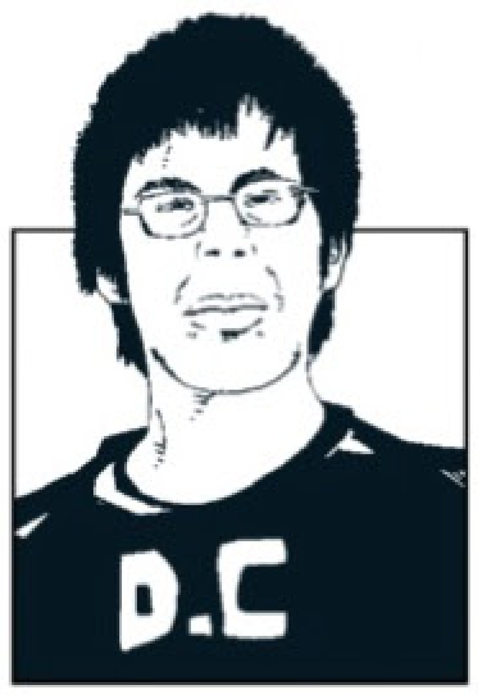
JONATHAN WELLS

MORTAL KOMBAAAT!! Dah, Dah, Dah, Dah, Dah Dah! Dah, Dah, Dah, Duh Dah Dah! *Trilogy*.

Expertise:
Tackling dirty nappies and retro spreads

Currently playing:
Super Time Force

Favourite game of all time:
The Secret Of Monkey Island



DAVID CROOKES

It may have had a lack of tracks and vehicles but the off-roading of *Sega Rally Championship* drove me crazy with excitement.

Expertise:
Amstrad, Lynx, adventures, *Dizzy* and PlayStation (but is that retro? Debate!)

Currently playing:
Sleep catch up

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



PAUL DAVIES

NiGHTS!!!!!! It's one of the happiest places I've ever been inside my own head, to the point of tears.

Expertise:
Repeatedly banging my head against a brick wall

Currently playing:
GTA V

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N' Ghosts



MARTYN CARROLL

Sega Rally. The game that almost made me choose Saturn over PlayStation.

Expertise:
Sinclair computers, Spectrum software

Currently playing:
Rabbid's Go Home

Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy

LOADING...



Many of you know that I have a thing for collecting. Many of you will also know that I rarely maintain my interest for very long. Several years back I was amassing a complete collection of PAL Dreamcast games and I was doing very well thank you very much. I ran out of steam though, realising the remaining games I needed were rubbish and pricey. My collection is much smaller but I'm happy with what I've kept.

While there are some aspects of collecting I'll never understand (buying inferior PAL conversions over their NTSC counterparts) I certainly do love the thrill of collecting. I love discovering a rare game, or picking up a bargain. Hell, sometimes it's more exciting than playing the actual game. This month we speak to a group of collectors who have managed to amass far more impressive collections than I have. We'll find out what drives them, what others think of this obsession and it will hopefully inspire you to build your own collection.

My own collecting needs (and it is a need for myself) is now confined to snapping the UK's 270 most common birds, but that doesn't mean I've forgotten my games. In fact a copy of *Super Ghouls 'N' Ghosts* for GBA has just turned up now!

Enjoy the magazine,





> "I feel that we haven't yet seen the birth of gaming and that when people look back in years to come they will question when it started"
>
> David Braben

Retro Gamer GAMING ICON

Is David Braben gaming's greatest icon?

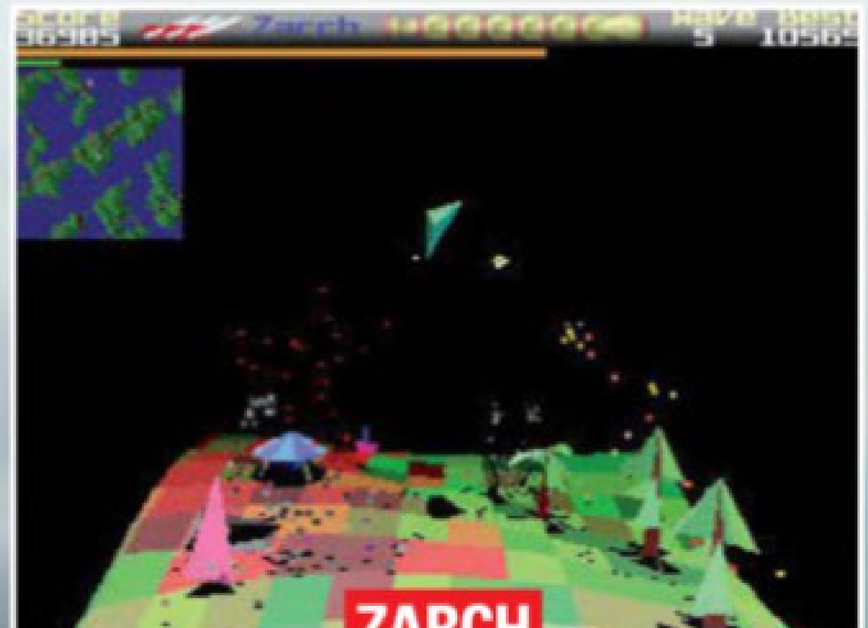
With the new generation now in full swing we felt it was the perfect time to celebrate some of gaming's biggest icons for an exciting upcoming feature.

Help **Retro Gamer** find the many important individuals who have turned our favourite pastime into one of the world's biggest forms of entertainment, so that we can give them the recognition they deserve in a future issue. Whether you believe it was Shigeru Miyamoto who refreshed the gaming landscape, or that Nolan Bushnell heralded the start of the industry as we know it, we'd love to have your input. As always the best suggestions will appear in the magazine, so take this chance to join in the celebrations and have your say.

You can tell us about your favourite industry veterans on the **Retro Gamer** forum, our Facebook page, or even via Twitter using **#videogameicons**.

We look forward to your suggestions…


ELITE


ZARCH

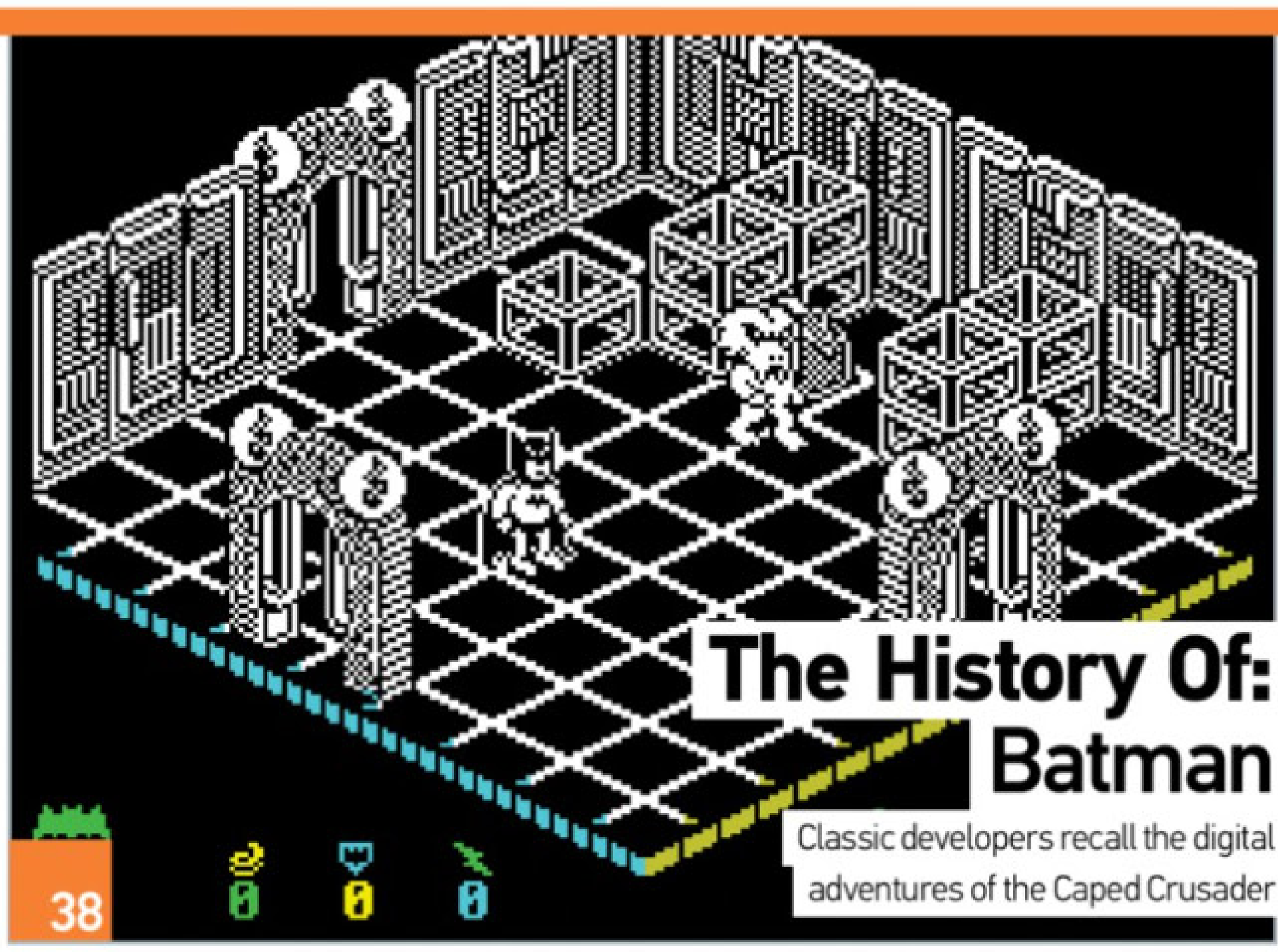

DOG'S LIFE


KINECTIMALS


ELITE: DANGEROUS

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>> Load 134 Breathing new life into classic games





RETRO RADAR

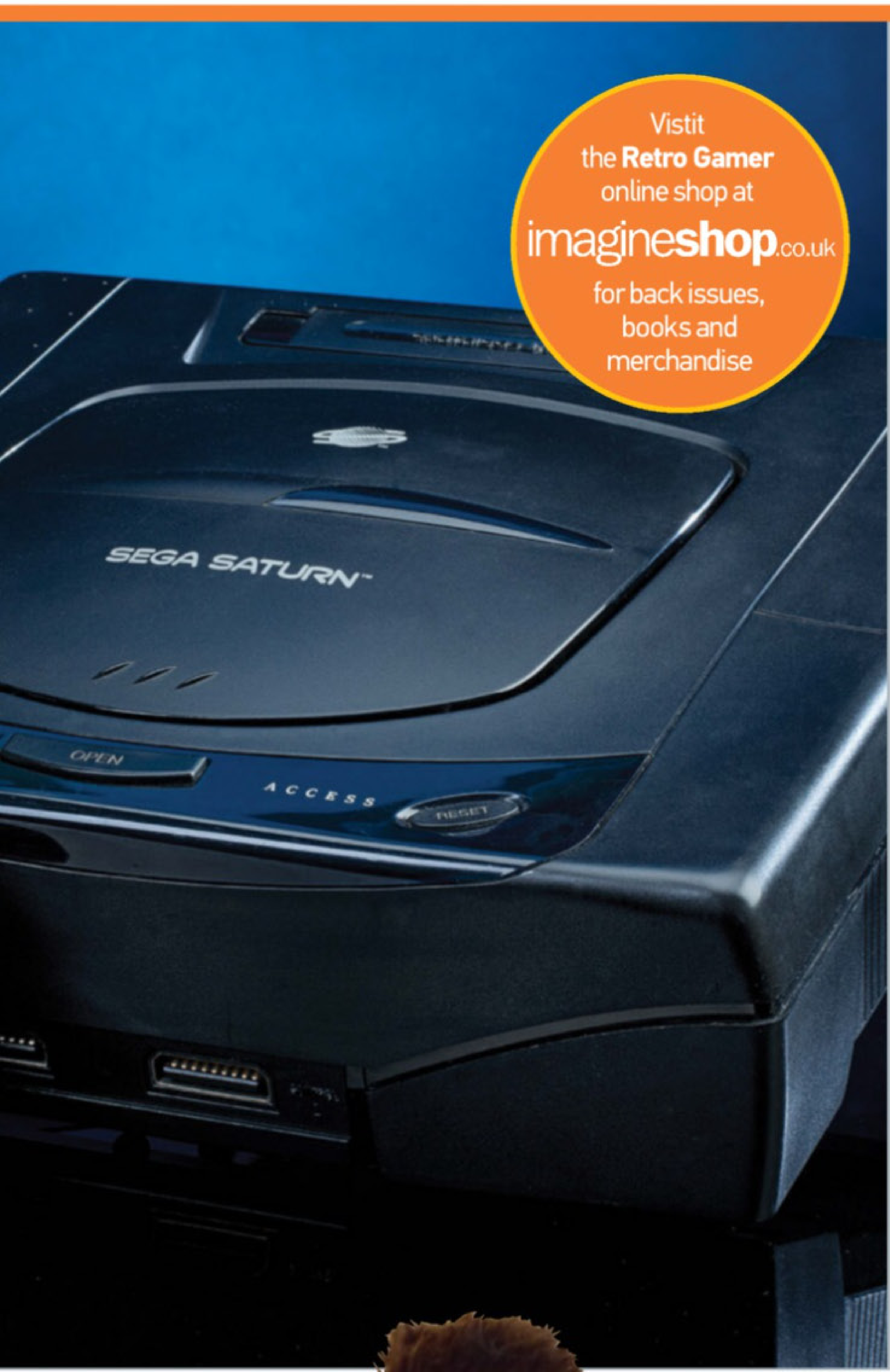
REVIVALS

FEATURED





© Brianna Blank



"A bloody mess that you can only hope isn't Cheryl awaits on the other side of the gate"

Nick Thorpe





The main room was nice and busy throughout the whole weekend.

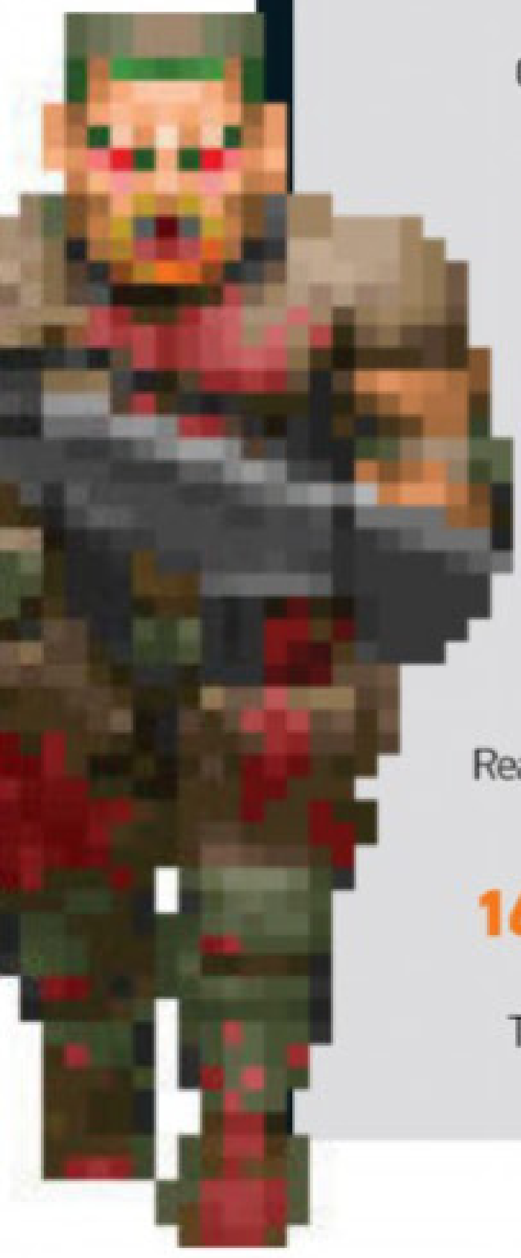
REVIVAL
REMEMBER... RELIVE... REVIVE...

JOHN ROMERO GETS RETRO



RETRO GAMER VISITED THE RECENT EVENT WHERE THOUSANDS GATHERED TO MEET A GAMING LEGEND

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Thousands of visitors, hundreds of computers and consoles, 60 coin-ops, 26 pinball tables, 12 dealers, two days of retro fun and one John Romero, co-creator of first-person shooters *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom*. That's a lot of numbers and they all added up to a memorable Revival 2014.

The retro event returned in early August for a second year and was once again held at Wolverhampton Racecourse in the West Midlands. Organisers Chris Wilkins and Craig Turner succeeded in putting on a bigger and better show that built on last year's solid bedrock. The main change was the relocation of the Saturday talks from the busy concourse to an upstairs function room that was quieter and yet still charmingly informal. Here was held a Newsfield gathering with Roger Kean, Oli Frey, Gary Penn and Steve Jarratt talking about the days of *Zzap!* and *Crash*, and this was followed by a lively Q&A with a number of ex-Ocean boys including Simon Butler, Jim Bagley and Mark R Jones. Hewson boss Andrew Hewson and *Dizzy* developer Andrew Oliver also held entertaining talks, but the most popular – at least in terms of people packed into the room, which was close to 200 – was the session with John Romero. **Retro Gamer**'s Paul Drury held the talk which saw John revisiting several keys game from his career, including hits such as *Doom* and *Quake* as well as less successful titles like *Daikatana* and *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows*. John certainly seemed to enjoy Drury's inimitable style and line of questioning. Indeed, throughout the whole day John was open and engaging and happy to chat and sign stuff and pose for pictures.



FPS legend Romero spent a lot of time signing stuff, like these *Doom* posters.

"Revival was great," he said after the event. "I'd not been to it before but it was lots of fun – a couple of thousand people and lots of old games and consoles. It compared very favourably to US events. I honestly wasn't able to participate in the rest of the event because I was busy for nine hours talking to fans, taking pictures, and signing autographs – I even signed someone's arm so they could tattoo over it! All this was in-between the



READERS WEIGH IN

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF REVIVAL?

ROBHEWSON

■ The show itself was great. What an energetic, enthusiastic and knowledgeable audience for the Hewson talk – Dad thoroughly enjoyed it! I don't think he was quite prepared for how much retro-passion the UK still has – quite the eye opener!

JOEFISH

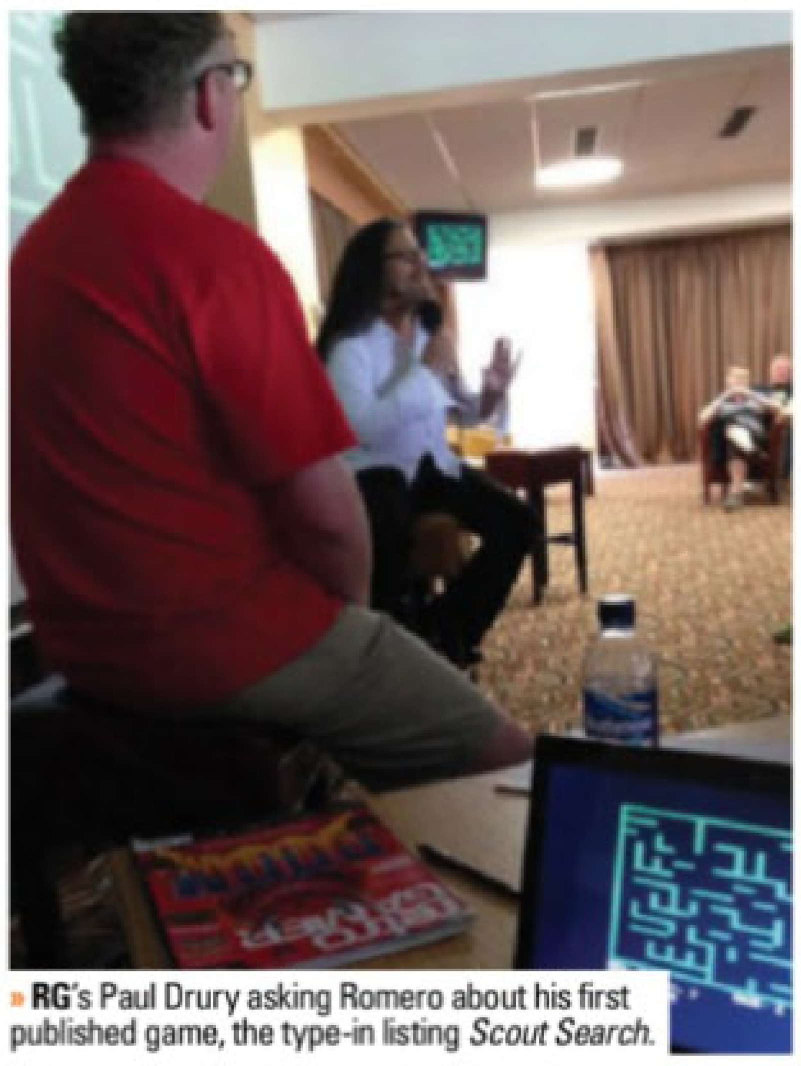
■ I thought it was great fun. There seemed to be more people though, which made it harder to get on some systems. I'd like to see more multiplayer link-up set-ups as there are more opportunities to play them at an event like this.

FELICEMAGGIE

■ As someone that helped out on behalf of the Centre for Computing History, one of the charities to benefit from the event, I thought Revival 2014 went very well. Even though it was very busy in the large second room where our kit was all set up, the feeling of being cramped didn't occur. We mustn't forget the stalls that were selling retro stuff too. These were very interesting and it was possible to pick up retro kit at decent prices. All in all, a great event.

HISNHER_LP (AJ)

■ I was blown away by it. When you first walk in you don't see much, but walking around a corner and seeing the whole room full of retro game machines was amazing. I didn't expect the two rooms to be as big as they were and the little rooms in between where great too. Everyone we spoke to was friendly, willing to chat, and just seemed to be there for the love of the games.



» **RG**'s Paul Drury asking Romero about his first published game, the type-in listing *Scout Search*.



» *Zzap!* to the future! Left to right: Oli Frey, Gary Penn and Roger Kean.

Q&A session, a *Doom* deathmatch tournament and lots of interviews. The deathmatch tournament was probably the highlight for me. I also had a great lunch with Jim Bagley – he did the Sega Saturn port of *Doom*."

John wasn't able to attend on the Sunday which, as usual, was a mellow affair with more gaming, less chat; more coffee, less alcohol. The day was still lively however, with 900 visitors through the doors (compared to around 1,500 on the Saturday). *Dropzone* and *International Karate* creator Archer MacLean made a surprise appearance, and it's things like this that make these events so much fun for fans – you never know who's going to turn up unannounced. Like those people who gave talks on Saturday, Archer was simply there to chat and mingle with like-minded people.

Once the event was over and everything cleared away, Chris was able to take a breather and reflect on Revival 2014. "The effort put into this year's event was far more than our premier in 2013," he says. "The challenge we set for ourselves was to take the great formula we had last year and improve and refine the areas where we knew we could do better, such as getting more pinball tables, having extra food outlets, and hiring the room upstairs for the talks. Craig did a sterling job with the layout, ensuring that the weekend never felt cramped even though the attendance was well up on last year."

> **"Revival was great… lots of fun. It compared very favourably to US events"** Special guest John Romero

So it was all worth it, presumably? "Definitely. For me the highlight was seeing all the planning, sweat and tears coming together to make a great weekend of retro gaming, along with all the positive feedback that has followed. Many attendees have said that Revival 2014 has been the best retro event in the UK to date. Of course having John Romero join us – the first gaming event he has attended in the UK – was rather special. The *Doom* deathmatch competition he took part in attracted a huge crowd of spectators around the stage area. Putting on a retro event of this size is what Craig, the team and I love doing. We are all part of the retro gaming community and this is our way of getting together with old and new friends, meeting some of our gaming heroes and giving something back to our hobby and those in the community that support us."

There's certainly space in the events calendar for a fun, fuzzy show like Revival – thousands of visitors and it would seem an equal number of happy faces proves that. So what's in store for 2015? "Watch this space," smiles Chris. *



» Co-organiser Chris Wilkins, left, with his family and John Romero and wife Brenda

SABOTEUR HAS INFILTRATED THE BUILDING

» Clive Townsend talks plans for the Saboteur series



» *Saboteur* creator Clive Townsend playing his 8-bit classic at the show.

■ A late addition to the guest list was Clive Townsend, creator of 8-bit hit *Saboteur* and its sequel. Clive visited the event with producer friend Steve Iles and manned a stand selling various *Saboteur* merchandise. While there he revealed plans for the long dormant series, which will initially involve updating the original Spectrum games – possibly via Kickstarter – and bringing them to a variety of modern platforms. If the reboots do well the next step will be to finally develop *Saboteur 3*, a project Clive has been wrestling with for more than 20 years. Nothing is concrete yet, but Clive's current idea for the third game is to transport Sab to some otherworldly realm and have him battle monsters and demons. Sounds cosmic.

D/GENERATION GOES NEXT-GENERATION

CULT COMPUTER CLASSIC SET FOR AN HD REMAKE

West Coast Software, the development team behind System 3's recent *Putty Squad* update, has licensed *D/Generation* for an HD remake. The original game, released in 1991 for the PC and later converted to the Amiga, Atari ST and CD32, was an isometric puzzle game which put players in the role of a delivery boy trying to get a package to the scientist Jean-Paul Derrida, while avoiding the deadly bio-weapons roaming his research facility. The game received high scores from the likes of *Zero*, *The One* and *Amiga Power*.

"We have been working on other retro-game titles, and *D/Generation* was the obvious choice for our first foray into next-gen publishing," says Ken Bird, CEO of West Coast Software. The connection becomes clear as he explains the company's relationship with the game: "John Jones-Steele, technical director at West Coast, converted the original PC game to Amiga, CD32 and ST back in 1991 and has always wanted to produce a new version so more people can get to play this excellent puzzle game. It took some time to track down the property owner, Robert Cook, but once that happened and we explained what we wanted to do with *D/Generation* we managed to negotiate a licence."

Fans can expect to see the game fully redrawn in HD, as well as new sound to bring the game into the modern era. The original puzzles will be present and correct, though plans are in place to cater for old fans with extra content: "We are planning to extend the original game with new levels available as DLC in the months following the initial release. This will continue the story in a way that fits the original premise of the game."

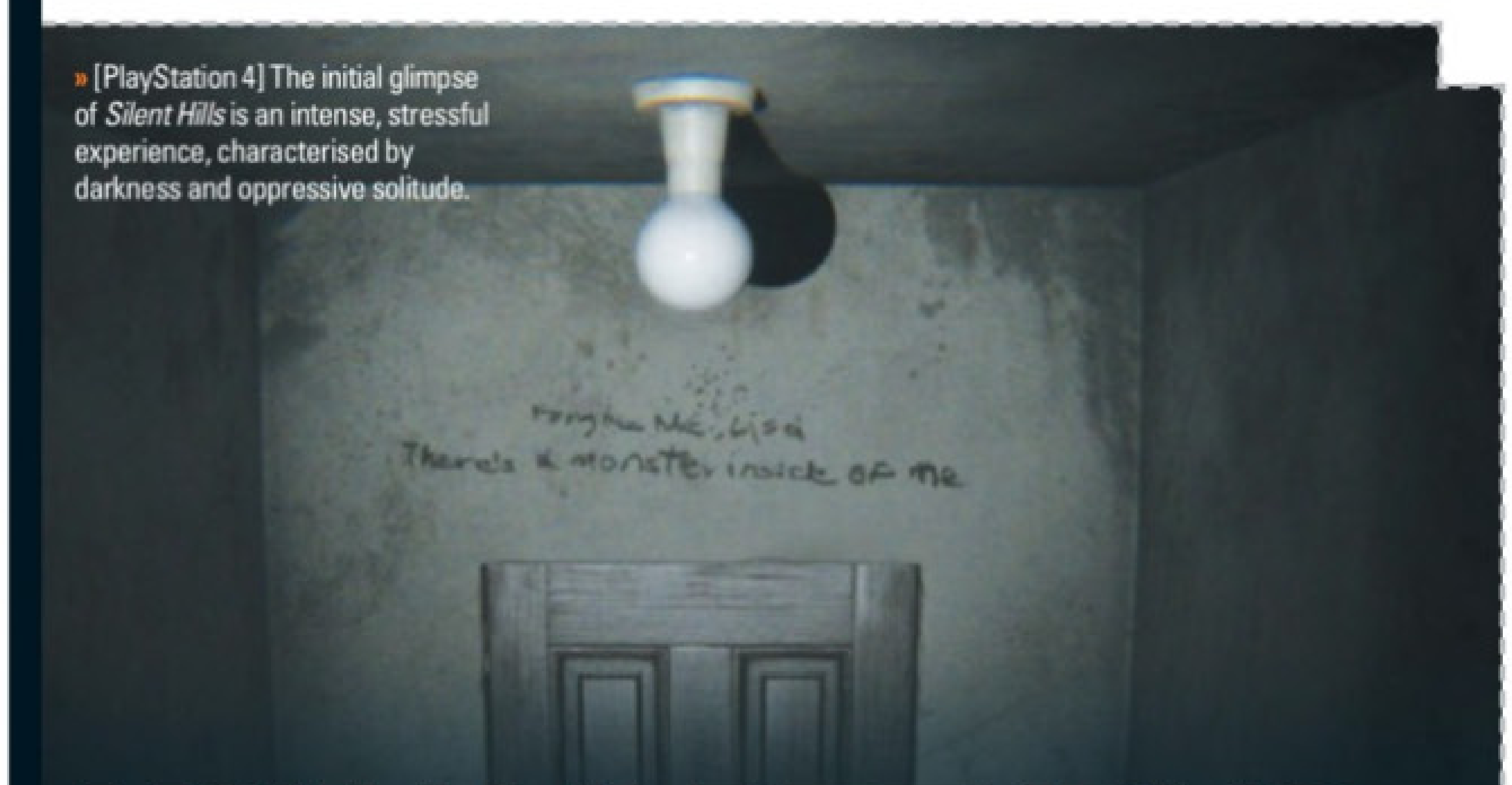
D/Generation is initially planned to release on Xbox One in time for Christmas, with other consoles following early in 2015.



» [Amiga CD32] Getting through Genoq's research facility requires a lot of thought and some smart use of your laser gun.



» The remake is being handled by West Coast Software, whose previous work includes *Putty Squad* and *James Pond* conversions.



» [PlayStation 4] The initial glimpse of *Silent Hills* is an intense, stressful experience, characterised by darkness and oppressive solitude.

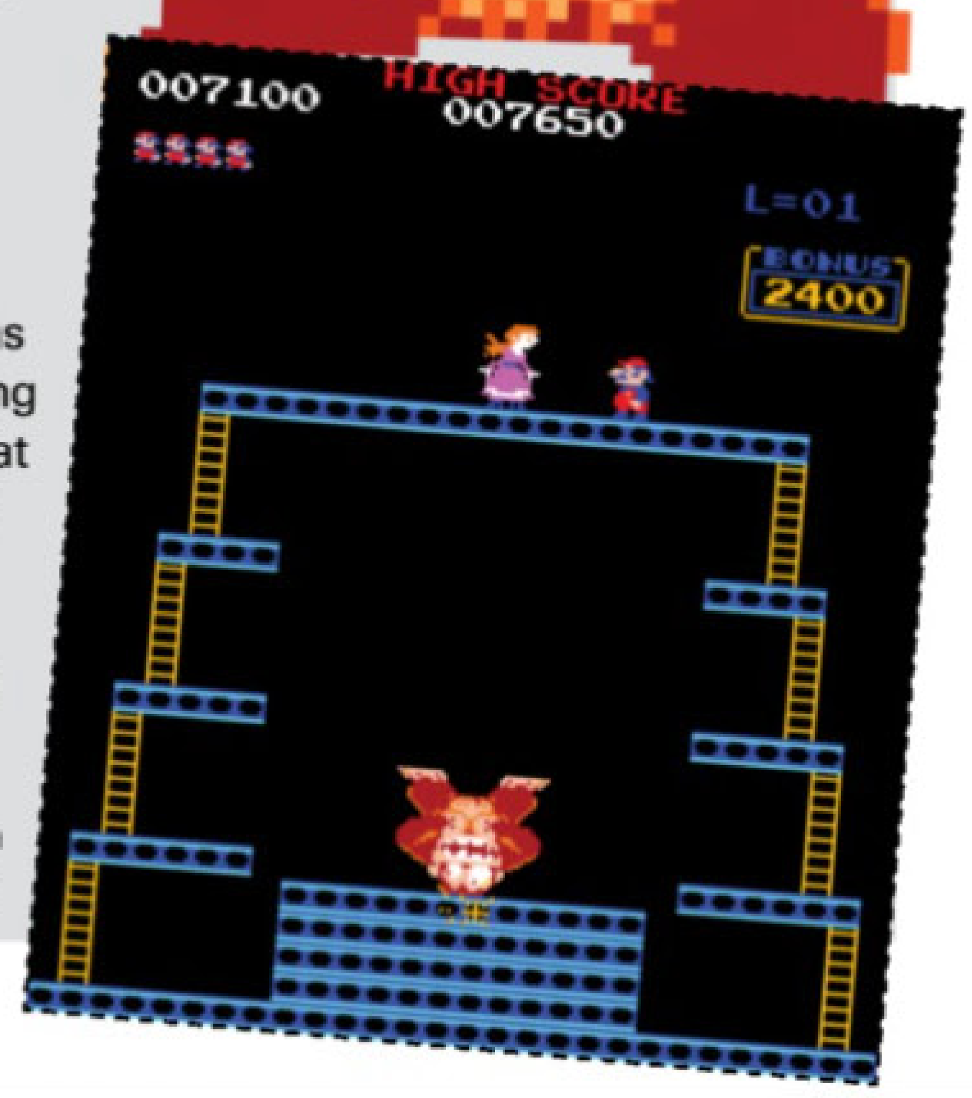
KONAMI RETURNS TO SILENT HILL

Konami has announced *Silent Hills*, a new entry in its famous survival-horror series, in a distinctly unusual manner. The publisher uploaded a demo for a PlayStation 4 survival-horror project simply titled *PT* to the PlayStation Network, with unsuspecting players being treated to a psychologically withering experience in a seemingly infinitely repeating corridor. Players soon learned the few details that are currently known about the game – that the title will be *Silent Hills*, the protagonist will be played by Norman Reedus from *The Walking Dead* and directorial duties are being handled by Hideo Kojima and *Pacific Rim* director Guillermo del Toro.

KONG HAS A NEW KING



Donkey Kong has its first new world record holder in four years, as Twin Galaxies has recognised Robbie Lakeman's score of 1,141,800 – but it might not stand for long, as the score surpasses the previous record by just 3,200 points. The record-setting three-hour game was broadcast online and came after a couple of near misses, including a game in which he was less than 2,000 points from setting the record. Robbie Lakeman's feat makes him only the fifth *Donkey Kong* world record holder, after Billy Mitchell, Tim Scerzby, Steve Wiebe and previous world record holder Hank Chien.



» [Arcade] Donkey Kong might have suffered a nasty fall, but the top scores just keep on rising.



Microsoft
LEAVE YOUR LIMITS
FORZA
HORIZON 2
Open it up in a truly massive open world. From day to night, dirt to pavement. Connect and race with friends in the most realistic – and unreal – driving game out there with more than 200 of the world's greatest cars. Get the demo now on Xbox One.
"Visually, Forza Horizon 2 is a thing of beauty"
– Trusted Reviews
"It's hard to not marvel at the glorious graphics"
– Pocket-lint
3
www.pegi.info
Microsoft Studios
Playground Games
Xbox.com/Forza
Features and requirements subject to change. Features vary between Xbox 360 and Xbox One version of game (each sold separately). Xbox One games for use only with Xbox One systems. Games made for Xbox 360 will not work on Xbox One. Xbox LIVE Gold membership (sold separately) required for online multiplayer; multiplayer between Xbox 360 and Xbox One not supported. On Xbox 360, some cars require download from Xbox LIVE (ISP fees apply) and a hard drive. For Xbox 360 4GB, Arcade and Core consoles (hard drive sold separately). Demo available for Xbox One only. Download from Xbox LIVE. 12GB required. ISP fees apply.
XBOX ONE

retro radar column



Here's my bio… Paul Davies
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.

AFK

We no longer start cars by winding a handle. Meat is not acquired via the hunt, but at supermarkets – ordered online. We still use a mouse and keyboard to play games though wtf.

In a moment of weakness during one of my 'Nintendo did it first' speeches to an unconscious friend, I remembered how novel it was to play *Quake II* on PlayStation. Beforehand I'd rubbished the dual analogue set-up of Sony's answer to N64. We'd had *Ape Escape* doing a great job of justifying the idea with rowboats and so on, but aiming while moving with a second stick? Weird but it worked.

Lo! The console first-person shooter was a thing, after a few faltering steps with classics including *Exhumed* (*PowerSlave* in the US) and *Ultimate Doom* that had relied on clunky workarounds. Thanks to Dual Analogue (okay Sony, take a bow) AWSD looked like becoming a thing of the past. There was something horribly familiar about this though…

A lot of us started out using 'Z', 'X', ':' and '.' to take our baby steps into computer gaming. When we got to use 'Space Bar' too it was just incredible. The noisy clack-clacking of the keys as we escaped that blasted bird in *Chuckie Egg*, frantically climbing ladders and backtracking beneath its belly with split-second timing… all this seemed so laughably old fashioned when the first consoles came out.

Playing *Double Dragon* on Sega-branded Master System controllers; it was like there would be no going back to typewriter skills. Occasionally I'd dig out the BBC Micro analogue sticks, completely terrible for anything really – including trying to draw lines of any sort – to guarantee tears of laughter. In fact, I think this would still work if you have any lying around.

But, anyway, we were hungry for the arcade experience in our homes. Did you see anybody playing *R-Type* or *Shinobi* using a flippin' mouse and keyboard in the local chippy? No! Joystick and buttons were the way forward. After *Street Fighter II* it was end of story. Saturn six-button controller ftw!

Namco gave us NeGcon and JoGcon to play *Ridge Racer* while accelerating the onset of arthritis. We've had plastic guns to shoot things, magic wands to play sports games. Cameras can now detect our movement, albeit pretty badly, and we can just speak instructions to the console in some cases. So, this must now be the future right? Please, enough with the mouse and keyboards already.

Amazingly (or not), 30 years or so after we began tapping keys on a computer to move stuff around, we're still here. It doesn't end at the movement controls; your typewriter skills come in useful to bring the Tab button into play, and the goddamn function keys, the scroll wheel on the mouse, and about 20 other things assigned to designated hot-keys. You can spend over £100 on a gaming keyboard that lights up and has its own LCD display. I guess it wasn't enough that the Atari Jaguar addressed the problem of not enough buttons, with special overlays too for immersive experiences with *Alien Vs Predator* and… yeah okay.

My point is… okay, my point is that although the Kempston Competition Pro and co were truly badass , their mission failed the mullet-wearing massive. The keyboards… they won! *



What do you think?

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk www.retrogamer.net/forum

DISCUSS

Do you collect and why do you do it?

Forum
www.retrogamer.net/forum

■ I try to ensure that the games that I collect are actually ones that I want to play at some point in the future and not just filler stuff. Having said that, I do buy every PlayStation Vita game released as it's a great system that I want to support. **Morkin**

■ I don't mind collecting stuff as long as it is going to be used at some point, I have a shed load of computers, consoles and games and I like to rotate them in terms of usage every few weeks. **PanzerGeneral**

■ I used to collect, not just videogames but with music as well, until I realised 'hmm there could be something beneath this', exposed some issues that needed tending to and now only keep my very favourite games – which I do play. **ncf1**

■ I think it's because as a kid I saw all those games and wished that I had them. Now I'm just a big kid but I can finally afford them; so I guess I'm just making up for lost time. **paranoid marvin**

Twitter
Twitter.com/@RetroGamer_mag

■ I collect games for the same reason others collect works of art – I admire them, enjoy playing them and I want them! :) **@Hayden Yale**

■ I dont really intend to collect. I buy what I like the look of and I've never sold any game I've owned. **@john davies**

■ I collect game series. I even bought the console for those games of the series that were only published for that platform. **@Andrés Más**

■ It's nostalgia for me and keeping a promise to my younger self to buy loads of games when I have my own £. **@Dan Gill**

■ Replaying a game can take you back to your past; just like a great song. Brings back smiles long forgotten. **@David Fisher**

■ For me, it's a bit of catch up and experiencing how fun your classic favourites can be all over again. Dog-eared manuals and all! **@Dungeonbuster**

Facebook
facebook.com/RetroGamerUK

■ Collecting adds colour, variety and joy into my life and others around me. Its simple and open to every one but is incredibly rich and rewarding at times and can last a lifetime. **Paul Baggett**

■ I like to be surrounded by & reminded of the things I enjoy. There's also something to be said for having the original - the original system, the original cart, the old monitor it was designed with in mind. **Jordan Blake Cook**

■ There is something special collecting old games and collecting history. **Vincent Cobb**

■ By collecting them you accumulate a sort of museum of gaming, which is cool, having people come around and recognise a certain game from their childhood, unlocking that memory for them through your collection is a nice feeling. **Britt Roberts**

■ I collect Retro Games because they bring back great memories of the best years of my life. It's pure nostalgia for me. **Nick Moudios**



What We Think

■ I couldn't really afford a lot of games growing up, so collecting lets me grab the stuff I always lusted after as a child. I'm slowly starting to realise however that collecting for collecting's sake isn't really for me and am cutting down my collection accordingly. PS I just bought some more GBA games. Aarrghhh!
Darran Jones

PICK OF THE MONTH

Retrode

If you're a fan of emulation who still longs for the days of cartridges, the Retrode might just be up your street. The device is a USB box which reads the majority of Mega Drive and SNES cartridges and produces files that can be used with emulators, allowing you to legally back up your cartridges and even your old saved data. The Retrode also has Mega Drive and SNES controller ports, allowing you to use your old pads for that authentic retro feeling, and can support other consoles such as the Master System and N64 through expansion cartridges.

Price: £64.99 **From:** retrotowers.co.uk

"Use your old pads for that authentic retro feeling"





Datadyne T-Shirt

We're big fans of showing off our retro love in both blatant and subtle ways, and this t-shirt certainly leans towards the less obvious end of the scale. Other people might incorrectly assume that it's corporate clothing or a somewhat botched *Terminator* reference, but other *Perfect Dark* fans will recognise your allegiance to the game's villainous arms manufacturing corporation.

Price: £15.99
From: www.8ball.co.uk

The Legend Of Zelda Hat

Much like the Datadyne t-shirt elsewhere on this page, this *Zelda* hat isn't the most obvious of retro references – but sometimes that's good, lest you wear so many pixels that you begin to resemble a Lego model of yourself. Other fans will recognise the iconic Triforce design instantly, but everyone else will simply think it's quite a nice hat.

Price: £14.99
From: www.funstock.co.uk



SupaBoy Portable Video Game System

If hooking a Retrode up to your smartphone seems like a rather impractical way of enjoying your favourite SNES games on the move, the SupaBoy might be your cup of tea. This handheld plays original SNES carts of all regions, contains a rechargeable battery and has TV output and controller ports to let friends join in on your *Mario Kart* sessions.

Price: £79.99
From: www.funstock.co.uk



Batman Video Game Appearance Action Figure

Batman might be one of the greatest comic book characters of all time, but some of us first came across the caped crusader in 8-bit form. If you're one of the people for whom the purple and blue NES look evokes more nostalgia than Michael Keaton, NECA's action figure is just the ticket – it even comes in a NES-style box.

Price: £21.99
From: www.amazon.com



Retro Gamer Coasters

Erase annoying drink rings and get a blast of nostalgia at the same time with our awesome coasters. Available in packs of four, these tough durable coasters feature some of the best **Retro Gamer** covers we've ever produced, making them perfect for your loved ones.

Price: £4.99 From: **www.imagineshop.co.uk**





MAGNAVOX ODYSSEY
"Personally the Odyssey has to be a collection highlight purely by virtue of its place in history as the first games console. My console is an original RUN 1 model and is complete."
PAID: £35

DUCK HUNT
"A well-known Famicom/NES title, but I really love this earlier lightgun set from an historical perspective. A battery operated spinning projector beams ducks onto a wall in your home and it's in superb condition."
PAID: £145.50

Turn to page 78 for our Gaming Obsessions feature

ULTRA HAND
"This was the first thing designed by Gunpei Yokoi following his employment by Nintendo and has made appearances in various Nintendo games. It may not be a game but my collection is very much about celebrating and preserving the history of videogames."
PAID: £22

JETPAC
"This was the first game I ever purchased with my pocket money and the one pictured is actually my original copy. It's incredibly important to me to have this and I still play this brilliant game from time to time."
PAID: £5.50

SORD M5 COLLECTION
"I really do like this obscure home computer especially as the majority of its games were released on cartridge. It is a huge challenge to find boxed games for but once in a while I am able to add another title to the collection."
PAID: £5

JEWEL IN THE CROWN
THAT PIECE YOU CAN'T BE WITHOUT

TWO GAME & WATCHES SIGNED BY SHIGERU MIYAMOTO
■ "The games themselves were car boot finds for a pound each many years ago. I was lucky enough to get to meet Shigeru Miyamoto during his one and only public visit to the UK as part of Nintendo's pre-launch promotion of *The Wind Waker* on the GameCube. We took them along and he signed them." **AMOUNT PAID**: £2.00

Collectors corner

Readers take us through the retro keyhole



BIO

NAME: Leigh Hills

ESTIMATED VALUE: £100,000

MOST EVER SPENT: £416.53 on the PAL A NES version of Stack-Up

FAVOURITE CONSOLE: Nintendo 64

FAVOURITE GAME: Mr Do's Castle

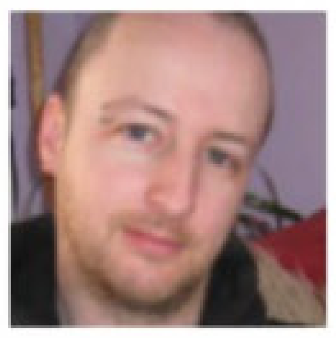
"I appear to have inherited the collecting gene," explains Leigh, a registered nurse from the south east of England. "My father is an avid record collector and I grew up observing him meticulously cataloguing his vinyl and frequenting record shops. As I was born in 1970, you can imagine the wonderment when games systems such as the Atari VCS began appearing." After constant nagging, Leigh persuaded his parents to purchase a Sinclair Spectrum for Christmas 1982, which kick-started his long-term love affair with gaming. "I've kept all my gaming systems over the years, so naturally these have accumulated over time."

After the Spectrum, Leigh's next love was the Mega Drive. "I used to see dozens of Mega Drive games at car boot sales for next to nothing," he explains, "and over time the collection grew to a point where I started to wonder how many games were released and sought to find out." Leigh's plan was to acquire all PAL games for the console, and in the process he discovered an incredibly rare game previously thought to have been unreleased in Europe. "My main contribution to the PAL Mega Drive fraternity was when I provided evidence of *Lakers Vs Celtics And The NBA Playoffs* by uploading a picture to RetroCollect." Only four copies of this game are known to exist today.

Like many collectors, and understandable given his passion for the preservation of videogame history, Leigh holds the condition of his collection as paramount. "I also like to make something complete again such as finding a manual to go inside a box, and this can make you feel like you are doing something towards the preservation of our gaming heritage." And the size of Leigh's collection has meant the days of all his games lined up neatly on shelving have sadly gone. With a section of favourite items stored in a glass cabinet, the majority of systems and games lie in plastic crates.

But what advice can Leigh offer to new collectors? "Never take your eye off the here and now. I believe there are many titles being released now that have got every chance of becoming tomorrow's collectibles. So rather than fretting about getting some 16-bit obscurity without selling your liver, I would encourage gamers to purchase these, look after them and remember that there was a time when you could find 16-bit games everywhere too."

a moment with…



Pete Daniels

Zool's graphic artist discusses his first mobile game, Bounce Vortex

When did you start creating graphics for games?
I started my career back in 1992 at Gremlin Graphics and the first project I worked on was the *Space Crusade* expansion tape for Amstrad, Spectrum and C64. I worked on a fair few titles at Gremlin (as projects were only six moths in length), including *Jungle Strike* (SNES), *Desert Strike* (Mega Drive), *Lotus Turbo Challenge* (Mega Drive), *K240* (Amiga) plus many more.

The software and hardware was still pretty basic back then, so my work machine was an Amiga 500 and I used Deluxe Paint/Deluxe Paint Animation to create all of the game images and sprites.

What has been the biggest change in how you create graphics?
The first and biggest change was the introduction of 3D to the gaming world. I remember playing *Tomb Raider* for the first time on PC and looking over the first drop and thinking 'wow, that's really far down'. After this I would probably look at normal mapping – the ability to make low polygon models look like high polygon models – as the jump in detail that became available was dramatic.

What was your favorite retro format to work on?
I loved working on the Amiga. The graphical quality that could be achieved far outstripped every other format of that era and since it was the machine I was using to create the art assets, you never had a problem with the conversion of file formats. *K240* from Gremlin was created both on and for the Amiga and I was lucky enough to work with the incredibly talented programmer Graeme Ing on the project, my favourite by far as we also shared the game design credits.

Which of your games would you recommend to readers?
Of the retro era, then I would highly recommend playing *K240* on the Amiga. It was a groundbreaking resource management game based in deep space where you had to mine asteroids for profit while fighting off the local aliens. It only took six months to create but was packed with new and innovative design features. I would also hope that people would checkout my new game *Bounce Vortex*, it's a dexterity-timing game which is simple to learn and play, but becomes challenging very quickly.

Is it fun to be working in a small team again?
Working in a small team has its advantages but also its own drawbacks. You are far more accountable for everything that goes into the game and quite often need another set of eyes to look over any sections you may have implemented to make sure it's how you envisioned it to be.

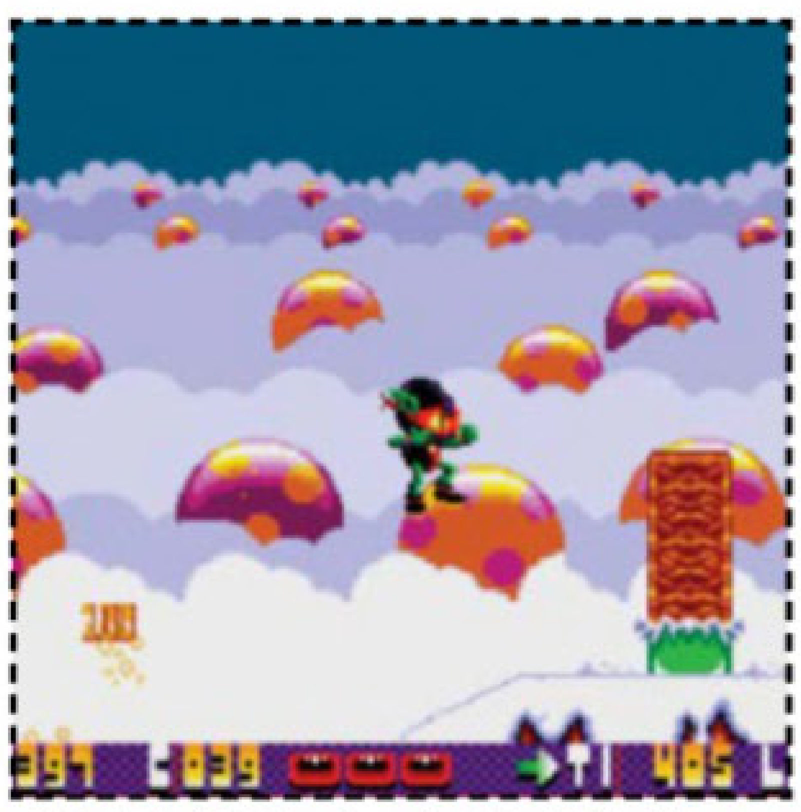
Quite often you will get so drawn into a project that you find yourself working continually and wonder where the time went as the sun starts to rise. On the plus side, you get to rid yourself of the red tape and contradictory views that can derail larger projects so the focus seems much more acute.

Did *Bounder* inspire your new mobile game, *Bounce Vortex*?
Very much so. *Bounder* used to be one of my all-time favourite Gremlin games, and just cried out for a touchscreen interface. Fast forward 20 years and touchscreens are the norm in mobile gaming so I wanted to create a game that had a similar feel as *Bounder*, without just creating a copy. I would therefore class *Bounce Vortex* as a grandchild of the brilliant *Bounder*.

Do you have plans for more games, with any retro influences?
There's nothing on the immediate horizon, but there are a lot of early project outlines I'm involved in with other industry veterans (sorry for being vague, but I can't say much more without breaking NDA contracts). I would love to create a modern day version of *K240* with the original programmer (Graeme Ing) as I think we could create a brilliant version with lots of new ideas for the touchscreen era. *



» [SNES] Before he moved into iOS development Pete was working on games like *Jungle Strike*.



» [Mega Drive] Pete's early work at Gremlin Graphics included working on the likes of popular platformer *Zool*.



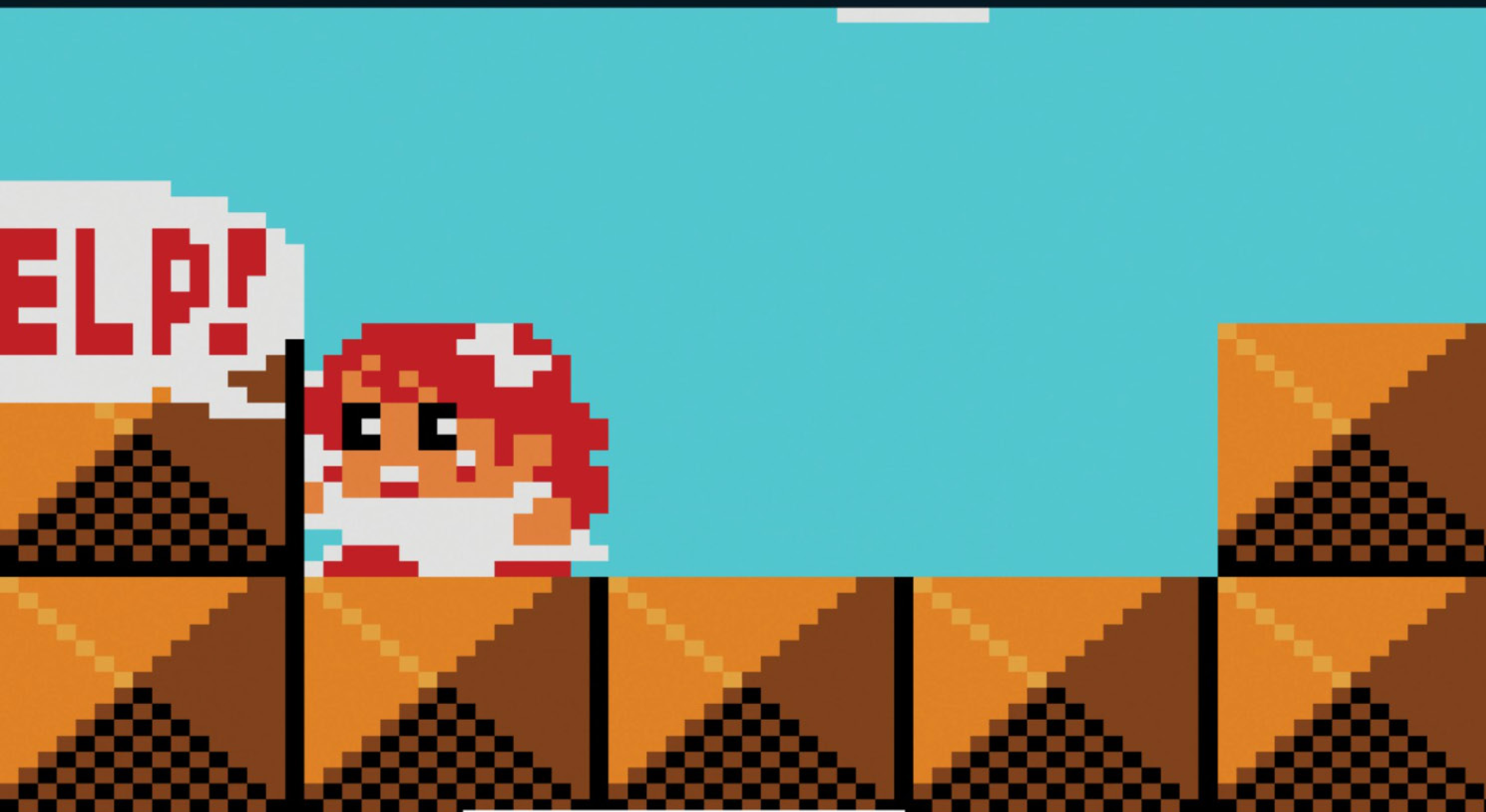
» [iOS] Infinity Mode challenges you to stay alive as long as possible without falling into the vortex…



» [iOS] The classic *Bounder* influenced the gameplay of *Bounce Vortex*.

retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL





Popils: The Blockbusting Challenge

MORE CULT FAVOURITE THAN BLOCKBUSTER…

#80

» TENGEN » GAME GEAR » 1991

Not to go all hipster on you, but you've probably never heard of *Popils*. A 23-year-old Game Gear exclusive, which has never had any kind of follow-up or re-release? There's even next to no presence on YouTube!

This is the Game Gear game I remember spending most of my time on, those aforementioned 23 years ago. The premise is that you, a young boy, have to reach the princess on 100 mind-bending screens, which include blocks (and non-breakable), ladders, doors, spikes, slimes, bats and more. You are able to punch certain blocks and items, with Alex Kidd-like prowess, which will then cause all items above to descend by one row. Your aim is to get into a position where you can reach the princess, whereby the level ends with a sweet embrace. Doing this in the lowest number of steps possible is the ultimate aim, which proves incredibly challenging on later levels. This is one-hit kill territory, too, as if things weren't challenging enough.

Bored with the 100 main levels? Then make your own! Using the map edit feature, you could create your own levels, to exactly the same standards as the developer. This was a very impressive feature to me at the time, as it was the first game I played that allowed you to do this.

Most handhelds are known for having a strong, addictive puzzle game. Game Boy – *Tetris*. Lynx – *Chip's Challenge*. Game Gear – *Columns*? Nope, I'd go for *Popils* every time. *

DANIEL HINCHCLIFFE

SEGA SATURN

20 years ago, Sega had conquered Earth and was looking to expand its empire across the galaxy, but poor decisions and an unexpected invader foiled its plans. Nick Thorpe looks back at how the Saturn failed to run rings around its competition – and why it can still stand proud alongside them



Sega's Saturn is an odd machine. It's a console which was launched by a market leader but quickly outgunned by a competitor with greater resources, and one which brought its manufacturer long-desired domestic success but caused the collapse of its international empire. The Saturn was a console ill-equipped to compete in the marketplace of the mid-Nineties, but the qualities that ensured that are the very same qualities which have caused it to age splendidly. To find out how the machine ended up as such an oddity, we'll need to go back to the beginning.

As early as 1993, Sega was looking towards replacing its incredibly popular but ageing Mega Drive hardware – it wasn't in any rush to abandon the platform, but as a forward-thinking console manufacturer the company was aware that the machine couldn't last forever. As had been the case with previous Sega hardware, the new machine was being designed in Japan by Hideki Sato's engineering team. However, times had changed – when the Mega Drive had been designed, Sega of America was a tiny entity and Sega Europe didn't exist. However, Sega's success in the 16-bit console war had seen both branches experience rapid growth, and they had their own ideas what the next machine would look like.

While Sato's team was busy putting together its own design, a variety of ▶


SEGA SATURN™
POWER
OPEN
ACCESS
RESET



» The AV out port handles S-Video, RGB Scart, Composite and RF.

suitors were approaching Sega hoping to make their own console designs a reality. Trip Hawkins offered Sega the opportunity to get on board with the 3DO. Sega of America proposed a partnership with Sony, in which hardware rights were shared and software rights were split. Silicon Graphics Inc, most famous for providing hardware to Hollywood special effects teams, approached Sega with a promising chipset a little later. Sega's response in all three cases was to reject the outside designs and rely on its own people, for reasons explained by former Sega of America CEO Tom Kalinske in our interview box out.

Sato's team eventually produced a design which was both complex and costly. The Saturn employed two Hitachi SH2 processors for processing and two custom VDP chips for graphics, along with a dedicated Motorola 68EC000 processor to drive the Saturn Custom Sound Processor chip. The hardware design ensured that the Saturn was a major advance over the 16-bit consoles, as former Iguana coder Steve Snake explains: "It was pretty similar to work with, just much better. It had a lot more RAM, speed, sound and graphics capabilities. The limitations you had to work around with previous consoles were mostly non-existent."

However, the Saturn's standing as compared to its competitors is a point of contention, even now. While it definitely had strengths – most notably some incredibly good sound hardware – it's often accused of being underpowered and difficult to work with, contributing to the long waits Saturn owners faced when waiting for PlayStation conversions.

It's an assessment that *WipEout* designer Nick Burcombe concurs with. "Technically, it was of course inferior to PlayStation, although as I recall, nowhere near as bad as the PlayStation fans and press were making out." *Alien Trilogy* developer David Shea, whose PlayStation version arrived five months before the Saturn game hit shelves, elaborates: "The Saturn was difficult to write for compared with the PlayStation. It used quads rather than triangles, which made for messy 3D maths, and the PlayStation came with (at the time) an awesome development kit and software libraries. You could look more impressive faster on the PlayStation, without being an assembler head."

However, not every developer was so unimpressed with the machine, as Steve offers a contrary point of view: "I heard a lot of people complain that it didn't come with any software libraries, and it was too complicated. I never understood that. The previous consoles didn't have any libraries

STAY IN CONTROL

Initially, the rest of the world received a different Saturn controller to Japan. See how they stack up…





JAPANESE PAD

SHOULDER BUTTONS
■ Satisfyingly clicky, with a pronounced ridge to distinguish them from the body.

FACE BUTTONS
■ Similarly sized to the Western pad, but with softer edges and a better feel.

D-PAD
■ A similar design to the Mega Drive's D-pad, but with the hard edges of the cross rounded off.

BODY
■ More elegant curves make for a nicer-looking pad than the Western design.

WESTERN PAD

SHOULDER BUTTONS
■ Shallow and spongy, these offer poor tactile response when pressed.

D-PAD
■ The concave centre leaves you hunting for the odd circular ridges to sense direction.

FACE BUTTONS
■ The plastic feels cheap, though the pronounced edges feel good under the thumb.

BODY
■ Angular and awkward, with a more pronounced curve than the Japanese pad.





» [Saturn] *Daytona USA*'s roughness exemplifies the Saturn's teething problems, but it delivered on gameplay.

» [Saturn] With RAM expansion cartridges the Saturn's 2D arcade ports outperformed their PlayStation equivalents.



either – programming straight to the metal is what we were all used to, and it allowed you to get the most from the machine. Even systems like the Amiga that did have libraries – most games didn't even use them at all! As for 'too complicated' – sure, it was packed with a lot of hardware – but you didn't have to use it all if you didn't need it. It was good to know it was there when you did, and none of it, taken on its own, was hard to work with."

It seems that working well with the Saturn was a matter of catering for the machine's idiosyncracies – approaches which worked on other systems would fail if not tailored to the Saturn's unique hardware. "When I started the project, I had to do a demo for id Software to approve," says Jim Bagley, who worked on the Saturn version of *Doom*. "I started by extracting all the levels and audio and textures from the WAD files, and made my own Saturn version of this, then got an early version of the renderer working using the 3D hardware. The demo got sent off, and a couple of days later I got a call from John Carmack, who stipulated that under no circumstances could I use the 3D hardware to draw the screen, I had to use the processors like the PC. Thankfully I enjoy challenges, so it turned out to be a really enjoyable project, using both SH2s to render the display like the PC did it, using the 68000 to orchestrate them both." Carmack's stipulation might have made for an interesting coding challenge, but Jim concedes that it "kneecapped" the Saturn game, which suffered from a poor frame rate and general slow speed.

Early titles demonstrated some of the struggles that developers faced. The Saturn hit Japanese shelves on 22 November 1994, with five titles initially available. Four of them were of little consequence: traditional board game *Mahjong Goku Tenjiki*, FMV murder mystery *WanChai Connection*, ball-rolling puzzler *Tama* and a port of *Myst*. The big hitter, which sold at an almost 1:1 rate with the console, was Sega's conversion of its hit arcade game *Virtua Fighter*. Despite the presence of some graphical imperfections in the form of polygon drop-out, import reviews were incredibly enthusiastic, with *Edge* going so far as to call it the "the first true 'next generation' console game." Sega press releases of the time claim that half a million Saturns were sold within a month of the Japanese launch, giving the system a great start to build from.

However, the PlayStation arrived less than two weeks after the Saturn, alongside a stunning conversion of Namco's *Ridge Racer*. "I remember seeing *Ridge Racer* running on a prototype PSone and being blown away," recalls David. "I don't ever ▶



» The internal battery is used to set the time and store saves. If it dies, you lose your precious saves.

SPEC OPS

The Saturn and its main competitors go head-to-head



	PLAYSTATION	SATURN	NINTENDO 64
STORAGE	**CD-ROM (up to 650MB)**	**CD-ROM (up to 650MB)**	**Cartridge (up to 64MB)**
CPU	32-bit MIPS R3000A-compatible RISC (33.87 MHz)	Twin 32-bit Hitachi SH2 (28.6 MHz each)	64-bit MIPS R4300i (93.75 MHz)
RAM	**2MB main RAM 1MB video RAM 512KB audio RAM**	**2MB main RAM 2x 512KB video RAM 512KB audio RAM**	**4MB shared RAM**
3D GRAPHICS PERFORMANCE	180,000 polygons per second with texture mapping and gouraud shading	200,000 polygons per second with texture mapping	150,000 polygons per second with all effects enabled (including perspective-corrected texture mapping, shading, anti-aliasing and texture filtering)
SCREEN RESOLUTION	**Minimum 256 x 224 Maximum 640 x 480**	**Minimum 320 x 224 Maximum 704 x 480**	**Minimum 256 x 224 Maximum 640 x 480**
SOUND	CD audio; SPU supporting 24-channel ADPCM playback	CD audio; Saturn Custom Sound Processor supporting 32-channel PCM playback and FM synthesis	Shared Reality Signal Processor supporting up to 100-channel PCM playback (16-24 typical); supports other sound formats with software codecs



» Here's an interesting fact. The reset button on Samsung's Korean model doesn't actually work!

remember that same feeling from the Saturn at all." In part, this was because the Saturn's titles suffered in early comparisons. When *Daytona USA* hit the Saturn, it played well but showed the teething issues that teams were having – it suffered from a low frame rate, major polygon pop-up issues and letterboxed presentation, none of which affected the PlayStation title. *Battle Arena Toshinden*, a PlayStation fighting game, offered a texture-mapped look which set it apart from *Virtua Fighter*. As a result, the Saturn gained an early reputation for being bad at producing 3D visuals.

The system's standing wasn't helped by a disastrous international launch. Knowing that Sony would provide formidable competition, Sega's president Hayao Nakayama wanted to get an advantage with early adopters by bringing the Saturn's launch date forward from the announced September 1995 date. Despite resistance from both American and European branches of the company, Nakayama would get his way. Tom Kalinske's keynote speech at the very first E3 show on 11 May 1995 included expected details such as the Saturn's features and its price – a rather steep $399 – but also included the unexpected announcement that the console was on sale that very day. Sony spent the show intent on taking the wind out of Sega's sails – both literally, when staff deflated Sega's prominent inflatable Sonic, and figuratively, by printing leaflets with messages including "If you buy a Saturn, your head is in Uranus." But the biggest blow came when Steve Race, a former Sega employee, made an incredibly short speech about the PlayStation's price. "$299," he uttered, before walking straight back off the stage.

The surprise American launch caused a number of problems. Sega managed to alienate key suppliers such as KB Toys, as only four large retail chains were selected. Additionally, third parties weren't given adequate time to prepare software for the machine, leaving just six Sega-published games available at launch. Early adopters were further starved of software, as only two more games were scheduled to launch before the original September date. The European launch, brought forward to July 1995, was similarly under-promoted and barren. As 1995 drew to a close, Sega was already having to fight back against the the PlayStation, which had received an impressive launch.

Thankfully, Sega's teams had managed to get to grips with the Saturn and had readied a trio of key arcade conversions for the Christmas season. *Virtua Cop* was an addictive lightgun shooter with an excellent scoring system. *Virtua Fighter 2* could lay claim to being the world's best fighting game and though it wasn't arcade perfect, the conversion was a beautiful piece of software, running at 60 frames per second in the Saturn's high resolution mode. *Sega Rally Championship* was a similarly potent shot back at accusations of 3D inadequacy, as well as being one of the best arcade racing games ever made. All three had a commercial impact, particularly *Sega Rally* which became the fastest-selling CD-ROM software ever released in the UK, but when all was said and done the PlayStation was still ahead.

But as the Saturn started to fall behind in the wider world, it was thriving in its homeland of Japan. It was a curious divide – what was the difference in approach? In part, it's simply because some of Sega's big games mattered more in Japan. In the UK, *Virtua Fighter 2* was lauded by the likes of *Mean Machines Sega* and *C&VG* and sold well for a Saturn game. In Japan, it was a million-selling phenomenon. To give you a rough idea of how much the series means to Japanese gamers, consider this: in a 2006 poll to determine the top 100 games of all time, Famitsu readers ranked *Virtua Fighter* higher than the likes of *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Super Mario World* and *Tetris*.

That alone is insufficient to explain the Saturn's Japanese success. However, it becomes much easier to understand when you consider that by the end of 1995, Sega had the likes of Atlus making exclusive RPGs such as *Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner* for the Saturn – a



» [Saturn] Despite its struggles with 3D, the Saturn still managed to turn heads with games like *Virtua Fighter 2*.

SEGA'S NEXT TOP MODEL

The Saturn has a surprisingly high number of hardware variants…











HI-SATURN NAVI
■ Hitachi's other Saturn model included additional GPS navigation features, as well as a portable monitor for in-car use.

SEGA SATURN (JAPAN)
■ Here's the standard Japanese model of Saturn, as available from launch – a big slab of grey plastic with blue buttons.

SEGA SATURN (WHITE)
■ A cheaper model of the Saturn with a small casing redesign, available in Japan. A black version of the same case was introduced in the West.

SEGA SATURN (EXPORT)
■ The Saturn was given a makeover for its international debut, sporting a new all-black look and a redesigned control pad.

SKELETON SATURN
■ Another Japanese Saturn with a transparent case, this was a tie in with Derby Stallion and lacks the This Is Cool branding.



» Games like *Burning Rangers* proved that the Saturn was more than capable of impressive 3D.



"I got a call from John Carmack, who said that under no circumstances could I use the 3D hardware"

Jim Bagley

massive boon, as the genre is enormously popular in Japan. This allowed Sega to build its customer base and a steady stream of classic RPGs made their way to the system over the years, including the likes of *Grandia*, *Princess Crown* and the *Langrisser* series. Special mention must be made of the *Sakura Taisen* series, a strategy RPG with dating sim elements which became a hugely popular franchise, spawning spin-off media and even a Tokyo cafe. All of the games mentioned above were exclusive to the Saturn for at least a year if not permanently, cementing the system as a good buy for RPG fans.

Going into 1996, it became clear that the Saturn was losing further ground outside of Japan. Sega had needed to slash prices in order to compete with the PlayStation, though it wasn't outwardly admitting that fact. "Up yours, we won't panic, you're the ones who are frightened, you're the ones running away and we're going to kick your arses while you're running," was Sega's European marketing director Andy Mee's response to one Sony price cut. The reality couldn't be more different. For all of Sega's bravado, there were three times as many PlayStations as Saturns in European homes in October 1996 and the gap didn't look like closing, especially after the console's planned Christmas blockbuster *Sonic X-Treme* was cancelled due to development issues.

Worse yet, the Saturn had gained more competition in June 1996. The long-awaited Nintendo 64 hit the ground running with the groundbreaking 3D platformer *Super Mario 64*, considered to be a strong contender for best game ever. While the machine would never achieve tremendous levels of success in the Saturn's stronghold of Japan, it quickly surpassed the Saturn in the West and drew attention away from Sega's system. However, something funny started to happen that year – having realised that their machine was falling out of favour with publishers and the media, Saturn fans began to club together and look beyond the mainstream.

Websites such as Dave's Sega Saturn ▶



HI-SATURN

■ A black Japanese Saturn with white buttons, manufactured under licence from Sega by electronics giant and Saturn CPU supplier Hitachi.



V-SATURN

■ Saturn CD-ROM drive supplier Victor (better known as JVC) manufactured this grey Japanese Saturn with colourful buttons.



SAMSUNG SATURN

■ Manufactured by Samsung to get around South Korean trade laws, this Saturn model is known for having a faulty reset button.



SEGA SATURN (SONIC STAMP)

■ Despite Sonic being underutilised during the Saturn years, Sega still saw fit to stamp his silhouette on this.



THIS IS COOL SATURN

■ A Saturn with an awesome see-through case, produced in limited numbers for the Japanese market. Now an expensive collector's item.

THE THIRD DIMENSION

While the Saturn's strengths didn't lie in 3D graphics, some games pushed the limits hard...











NIGHTS INTO DREAMS
SONIC TEAM

■ The high points in *NiGHTS* are some of the most impressive sights you'll see on the Saturn, from the underwater section of Splash Garden to the warping world of Soft Museum. We have a major fondness for the climactic battle with Wizeman, which stands out by showcasing some rarely-used effects.

SONIC R
TRAVELLER'S TALES

■ *Sonic R* boasts racetracks that could easily form the basis of proper Sonic platforming stages, thanks to their multiple shortcuts and extra routes. Everything is suitably colourful and environments look top-notch, especially as a clever fade-in effect masks the game's low draw distance – a common problem on the Saturn.

BURNING RANGERS
SONIC TEAM

■ Sonic Team's final Saturn release wrings about as much out of the machine as possible – real transparencies, huge environments and lighting effects are all on show. However, the Saturn is noticeably creaking under the strain of everything being asked of it, perhaps showing that its limits had been reached.

DEAD OR ALIVE
TECMO

■ Tecmo's fighter brings a high resolution display and silky frame rate to the ring. It's a close call between this and *Virtua Fighter 2*, but *Dead Or Alive*'s backgrounds seem to work as intended more often than those in Sega's game, better compensating for the loss of the arcade version's 3D backdrops.

PANZER DRAGOON SAGA
TEAM ANDROMEDA

■ One of the more expensive Saturn games also happens to be one of its prettiest, which is no surprise as its predecessors were also great in their day. Environments look incredible in *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, but battles steal the show with dynamic camera work adding to the sense of action.



» This cartridge slot is used not for games, but to add additional RAM, or devices like the Action Replay.

▶ Page (www.sega-saturn.com) and the infamous UK:Resistance (www.ukresistance.co.uk) became important community hubs for Saturn owners, providing news and reviews for the system while maintaining a close 'insider's club' feel. This fan support persisted as there was a whole lot of great software available – Sega continued to release conversions of excellent arcade games such as *Virtual On* and *Fighting Vipers*, as well as amazing console exclusives like *NiGHTS Into Dreams* and *Panzer Dragoon Zwei*. Some third parties began to get to grips with the machine too, as shown by releases like Lobotomy Software's *Exhumed*, Treasure's *Guardian Heroes* and Capcom's 2D fighting games. The Saturn might have been struggling to attract new owners, but it was doing a great job of entertaining its existing audience.

The Saturn entered a period of commercial decline in the West during 1997, in part because the non-Japanese branches of Sega had conceded defeat and were already looking to the future – and that meant new hardware. "We won't catch Sony up, there's no doubt about that," Andy Mee stated in the first issue of *Saturn Power*, mere months before being made redundant as Sega sought to cut costs. Sega of America CEO Bernie Stolar was even more explicit when he said "the Saturn is not our future" during a keynote speech at E3. It wasn't an untrue statement, but spoken in June 1997 it was a premature one as Sega wouldn't have a new console ready for almost a year and a half. The result of the speech was that Western retailers, publishers and press alike had sufficient reason to abandon the Saturn – and they began doing just that.

"It was nowhere near as bad as the PlayStation fans and press were making out"
Nick Burcombe

In Japan, the Saturn was in the middle of its busiest year yet. 351 titles were released for the console in 1997, substantially more than either of the other markets ever received during the Saturn's entire lifetime. This thriving market didn't just benefit gamers in Japan – the same hardcore gamers that sought their own coverage online were looking beyond the mainstream for games too, and found that the import scene was providing an abundance of them. In particular, the machine catered well to arcade fans who prized the 2D shoot-'em-ups and fighting games that were falling out of fashion in the West. RAM expansion modules were released which allowed closer conversions than could be achieved on the PlayStation, including more animation frames and in some cases additional features. In the UK, *Sega Saturn Magazine* would refocus around this hardcore audience and became a rare example of an official publication that covered the import market, providing in-depth looks at games like *Metal Slug* and *X-Men Vs Street Fighter*.

But while the Saturn had its strongest ever year in Japan, Sony managed to trump Sega in the RPG race. Squaresoft's *Final Fantasy VII* was a monster hit upon



» [Saturn] Sonic was something of a non-factor on the Saturn, reduced to spin-off and compilation releases.

its launch in January 1997, selling over two million copies in just three days and helping to draw players away from Sega's hardware. The Saturn would maintain a decent standing and hosted many of the year's best-selling games, but the PlayStation had clearly pulled in front and was still accelerating. Unlike in the West, where the company had basically given up marketing the system, Sega was still in a good enough position that it could revitalise its brand. The company began a new advertising campaign around the character Segata Sanshiro, a parody of film character Sugata Sanshiro who would punish people who weren't playing the Saturn with judo throws. The character gained a cult following and the renewed marketing push helped to sustain the system into 1998, even spawning a spin-off Saturn game.

But for fans of the Saturn, 1998 was to be a bittersweet year. The final few games that trickled out in the West included absolute classics like *Panzer Dragoon Saga* and *Burning Rangers*, but release schedules were barren. In Japan, hardcore shoot-'em-up *Radiant Silvergun* turned heads and *Sakura Taisen 2* sold ▶

» [Saturn] *Panzer Dragoon* was the most expensive game Sega had ever developed.



» [Saturn] Games that were ported from other systems tended to struggle on Saturn.





» We're not a big fan of the chunky Western pad but many gamers swear by it.



» [Saturn] *Radiant Silvergun* was a stunning late release, perfectly ported due to its origins on the ST-V arcade board.

half a million copies in a blockbuster first week, but software production was evidently winding down as Sega prepared to introduce the Dreamcast, with over 100 fewer titles produced than in 1997. The machine was for all intents and purposes finished, though a handful of games would be released in 1999 and 2000 (less than 20 in total), including the excellent *Street Fighter Zero 3*.

It's not hard to see why the Saturn failed so spectacularly in the West – put simply, it was the wrong machine for the time. Tastes were shifting, both in terms of what games looked like and how they played. Polygonal graphics became the norm in the Saturn's generation, and the Saturn wasn't best equipped to handle them. It's also worth noting that though it made an initial impact with excellent arcade conversions, the PlayStation came to be defined by games like *Final Fantasy VII*, *Metal Gear Solid* and *Gran Turismo* – longer games, games with cinematic ambitions, and games which opted for more muted colour palettes to strive for realism. Meanwhile, the N64 was offering expansive 3D worlds in *Super Mario 64*, *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* and *Banjo-Kazooie*. These were the types of games that consumers came to favour and they were not abundant on the Saturn.

But it's similarly easy to see why there's still a great deal of affection for the Saturn. The Saturn is defined by games like *Sega Rally*, *NiGHTS* and *Virtua Fighter 2* – experiences drenched in colourful arcade flair, of the type rarely seen today. If you ever ventured into an arcade during the mid-Nineties, the Saturn is bound to host a number of your favourite games, and the system's strengths mean that it has a lot of excellent 2D games, many of which have aged better than the early 3D titles found on 32-bit platforms. The very fact that the Saturn offered such an alternative approach to gaming in the mid-Nineties is what makes it so worthwhile today – not only does it boast a line-up of great games, but those games are different enough to complement the other two platforms' offerings. Gamers of the Nineties might have thought Sega was on another planet, but today we can appreciate the Saturn for being worlds apart from the competition. *

ESSENTIAL SATURN IMPORTS

Darran Jones will argue that Sega's 32-bit console was built solely to play Saturn shooters, but plenty of other genres are also represented, from racers to RPGs



RADIANT SILVERGUN

DEVELOPER: Treasure **YEAR:** 1998

■ Everything about *Radiant Silvergun* is magnificent. Graphically it's spectacular with all sorts of fancy tricks that push the Saturn's hardware to its limits. Mechanically it impresses as well with a perfectly balanced weapon system, a colour coding scoring system – that would admittedly be refined in spiritual successor, Ikaruga – and some incredibly challenging bosses. Even a digital release on Xbox Live Arcade hasn't stopped copies of the Saturn original from selling for north of £100 on auction sites. An incredible shooter deserving of all its praise.

SHINREI JUSATSUSHI TAROMARU

DEVELOPER: Time Warner Interactive Entertainment

YEAR: 1997

■ Sadly, its insane price tag and sheer rarity will mean many will not have had a chance to experience *Shinrei Jusatsushi Taromaru* (or *Psychic Assassin Taromaru*). You're missing out on a delightfully nutty game that takes elements of *Shinobi* and *Alisa Dragoon* and marries them to insanely over-the-top action scenes that involve gigantic frogs and fantastic scaling and rotating effects. The difficulty is a little unfair in places, but the impressive visuals, inventive level design and stunning animation certainly makes up for it. If there's a better game where you can run across the backs of stampeding bulls, we've not played it.





MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH

DEVELOPER: Sega, Working Designs **YEAR:** 1995

■ Based on the Japanese manga, *Magic Knight Rayearth* is easily the best playable import RPG, thanks to a highly entertaining localisation by Working Designs, its fun combat system (you effectively control one character at a time, switching between them tag-team style) and some delightful 2D visuals. Unfortunately, its late release (it arrived in 1998, three years after the Japanese release) means you'll be hard pushed to get it for under £100. While we're on the subject of RPGs we stayed away from the Japanese ones due to their general inaccessibility.

KONAMI ANTIQUES: MSX COLLECTION ULTRA PACK

DEVELOPER: Konami **YEAR:** 1998

■ There's a host of fantastic compilations on the Saturn, from Capcom's superb *Generation* series, to various *Sega Ages* releases. We're going to go for this solid effort from Konami, which took its three PlayStation compilations and packed them onto one disk. An impressive 30 games are included covering everything from *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* to *Gradius*. The quality is very good, while the presentation is also superb. Konami created some cracking games for the MSX, so this is a great way to experience them.





DAYTONA USA: CIRCUIT EDITION

DEVELOPER: Sega **YEAR:** 1997

■ Okay so *Daytona* is available in the West, but let us explain its inclusion here over the likes of *Gale Racer*. The original *Daytona* played well enough but looked a bit pants. *Championship Circuit Edition* was then released, which added two new tracks, a link-up mode and additional music. *Circuit Edition* goes that little bit further by adding the excellent *Daytona Medley*, the ability to alter the drift mechanics of your vehicle – which greatly alters the way the cars handle – and the option to race at different times of day. It's the definitive version of the best Saturn racer that isn't called *Sega Rally*.

BUBBLE SYMPHONY

DEVELOPER: Ving **YEAR:** 1997

■ There's a host of import platformers for the Saturn, from *Astal* to *Mizubaku Daibouken*, but we kept returning to this charming effort. Despite being released after *Rainbow Islands*, it's subtitled as *Bubble Bobble II*. Franchise confusion aside, it's a fantastic game and everything you'd expect from a 32-bit *Bubble Bobble* release. There are four different heroes to choose from, each with their own skills; bosses are far more plentiful; it's possible to charge your shots and there are often multiple routes to take. It's otherwise more of the same, which means it's amazing fun to play.



ELEVATOR ACTION RETURNS

DEVELOPER: Ving **YEAR:** 1997

■ Taito's sequel to its popular arcade game was a marked improvement and particularly good on Sega's console. It's a wonderfully slick run-and-gun with gritty looking visuals, well-animated enemies and plenty of variety in its stages. It retains the same gameplay of the original but it feels much better to play thanks to tight controls and a challenging time limit that ensures you're always trying to reach red-coloured doors as quickly as possible. Other improvements include an excellent co-op mode, a vast array of new weaponry, the ability to throw bombs and the ability to explode oil drums to take out nearby enemies.



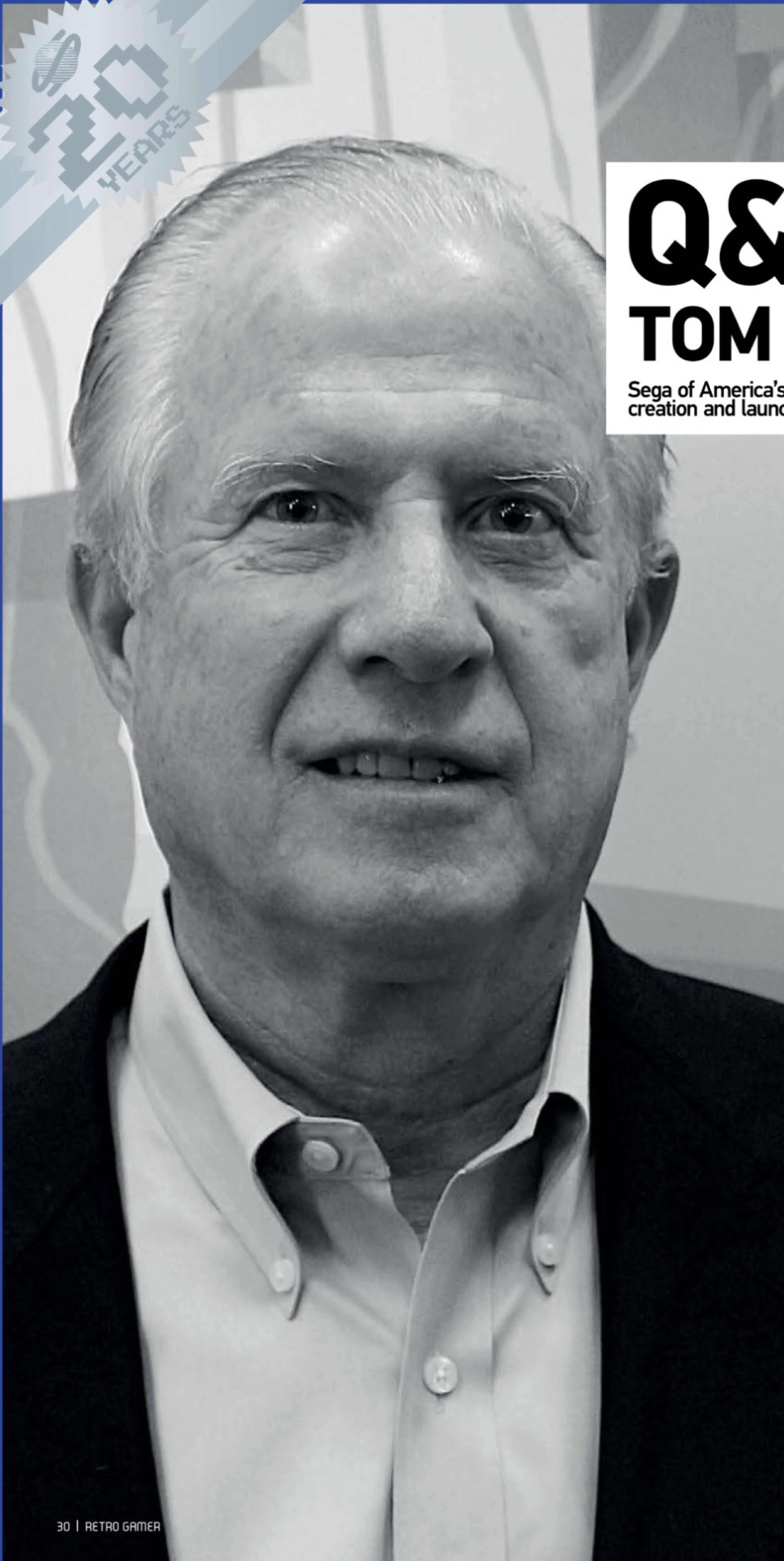


STREET FIGHTER ZERO 3

DEVELOPER: Capcom **YEAR:** 1999

■ While the first two *Zero* games reached the West, *Street Fighter Zero 3* remained a Japan exclusive. It's a stunning conversion of the arcade original, with a gigantic roster of characters impossibly slick animation and glorious backdrops. In addition to introducing the likes of R Mika, Juni and fan favourite Karin, Capcom also overhauled the combat system, adding three different playing styles called 'isms' and a new Guard Power Gauge that results in a 'guard crush' whenever it's fully depleted. It's another pricey Saturn game, though.





Q&A: TOM KALINSKE

Sega of America's former CEO tells the inside story on the creation and launch of the Saturn

When did Sega start looking at a successor to the Genesis?
Japan had started working on another hardware system fairly early on, I would guess as far back as '93, for the next system to replace the Genesis, and I know my head of R&D and I tried to get involved in the specs for the next hardware system around that time period as well.

Was this a natural process, or was there a feeling that the threat from a competitor's machine needed to be addressed?
I think it's a natural process because you know that hardware only has a limited life. Now, as for my opinion, I wanted to keep Genesis alive as long as possible – I mean, I didn't want to have to force another system onto the market because I thought that Genesis still had quite a long life, but nevertheless you have to be prepared with another hardware system. We were very aware of 3DO, in fact I recall Trip Hawkins came to Japan to meet with the Sega of Japan people and attempted to sell them on doing the 3DO around that time period. I knew Trip well, so that was an interesting meeting where I wasn't exactly for us taking over the 3DO system, I thought it was way too expensive and as time told, it *was* way too expensive for the market.

That's interesting, as you've mentioned in previous interviews that Sony and Silicon Graphics, Inc also came to Sega with hardware designs around this time.
I'd got to know Jim Clark and he was chairman and CEO of SGI, and he contacted me and said that he and his team had developed a new chipset that they thought was perfect for a videogame system so Joe Miller, my head of R&D and I went over to SGI, saw the capabilities of this chipset and we thought it was very, very good. We invited Hayao Nakayama and Hideki Sato who headed the R&D for hardware – Sato came over with a team and they evaluated the SGI chip and they felt that it was too big of a chip, that in the process of manufacturing it there would be too much waste, and they also said that they didn't think its music capabilities were as good as it should have been, so they rejected doing that. Jim called me later and said 'well what do I do now?' So I said 'well, there's this other company up in Seattle that you might want to talk to' so he did and that became the next Nintendo system.
In the case of Sony, we had been working very closely with Sony here in the United States. I became very friendly with Olaf Olafsson and Mickey



Schulhof, who was president of Sony America, and we'd worked on a number of things, first of all doing Sega CD games. Anyway, later we said 'hey, let's do a hardware platform together,' so Olaf got his R&D guys, and I had Joe Miller and we put together a spec sheet and said 'let's make this the next hardware system'. We went to Japan and met with Sony first, and Sony said 'yeah, that's a good idea, let's do a hardware development together.' After all, you lose money on hardware and I was tired of always losing money on hardware, and I thought it was such a great deal because we were so much better at doing software than Sony was in those days. We'd share the loss on hardware, and we'll each make profits on the software we sell – well, we're better at that so we'll make a lot more money! We went to Sega Japan and Nakayama and the board said, 'what are you, crazy? We don't want to help Sony, they don't know how to do videogames', and so they turned me down.

And then, of course, they did go into the console business and did rather well with it. They had a good spec!

Was the Sega Saturn's hardware ever drastically redesigned in response to a competitor's product?
I really don't think that's the case. Joe Miller and I, when we evaluated Saturn we thought the specs should be better than they were – for example, Joe was very much at the forefront of thinking on online connectivity, and he wanted internet access – he wanted faster speed, and a few other things I don't recall. I don't believe any of our suggestions were incorporated in the Saturn design!

You've mentioned that you didn't want to launch early, that you felt it was a mistake to do so. But Japan considered that this was not up for negotiation, correct?
Yeah, I was kicking and screaming, forced to do this. I wasn't crazy about the Saturn platform to start with, and when you're going to launch a platform you have to have sufficient software. Our original plan was to launch in the fall, and then we would barely have had sufficient software in my opinion. It just didn't have a proper assortment of software in different categories of games. All of a sudden I get this call from Nakayama and he says 'you've got to launch it at the show' – well, we're not ready! So he said how much hardware he was going to ship over and I said that wasn't enough for distribution, but he said 'well, you've got to start so just pick a couple of retailers and do it with them'. So I picked retailers to do it with and we announced it at the show, said it was on shelves that day. The room erupted, but all the other retailers were annoyed that they didn't have it and of course, we didn't have any software for it. So it was really not the way to launch a hardware platform at all.

> **"All the other retailers were annoyed, and of course, we didn't have any software for it"**
> Tom Kalinske on the Saturn's launch

The advantage conferred by the surprise launch seems very small, as you were only gaining four months on the competition – what did Japanese management hope to achieve in this time?
The feeling in Japan was that by launching early, we'd grab the early adopters and they then wouldn't buy the Sony launch and we'd have captured the cream of the crop early on. That was their theory, which didn't happen.

Did you have any contact with your European colleagues about the Saturn? What was their take on the system?
Oh yeah, I was in touch with guys like Barry Jafrato – none of us wanted to be forced to launch early and without a proper assortment of software, we were very much aligned on that. I think they did a better job of resisting than I did!

You were granted a lot of freedom when you started at Sega, but by 1995 you seem to have been getting overruled a lot. It seems like there was a change of attitude – what do you think caused that?
Yeah, something happened over there that I frankly wasn't aware of. I believe what it was – at least, this is what I've learned from Japanese colleagues later – that Nakayama used to go into the meetings in Japan and say to the Sega Japan guys 'why aren't you as successful as Sega of America and Sega Europe? Why are you guys failing?' And if you look at the actual numbers, which by the way I didn't really focus on until afterward, they really were failing in Japan – they weren't selling very much hardware, they were never successful with Sonic, they weren't successful with many sports games or other categories of games, they were somewhat successful with RPGs and strategy games. And you know, after a while if you're in middle management over there and Nakayama and others are coming in and yelling at you, asking why you aren't more like the guys in America and Europe, certainly you start building up an animosity towards the fellows in the US and Europe. So then they started to try to undermine what we were doing and worked on Nakayama and other members of senior management – 'hey, you shouldn't let these guys over there do these things, they're not doing it the right way – they're not doing it the Sega way'. After a while, that apparently influenced Nakayama to the point where he believed in them and started overriding what we wanted in the West.

What was Sega trying to do to fight back against the PlayStation going into the 1995 holiday season?
We were trying to get proper titles finished and available for the holiday season, and doing various promotions to try to fight back, as best we could. But by then I had pretty much decided that I was going to have to move on and had a conversation about that, I think it was right around Christmas time, with Nakayama. He flew over and tried to talk me out of that, but he understood why. I still have high regard for him, I just think he was forced by middle management as apparently happens in Japan – you can't overrule your middle management all the time and survive as CEO. So I understood his situation, and he understood mine.


» Tom was instrumental to Sega's success during the 16-bit period. He left shortly after the Saturn's release.



WASTE

SOME 26 YEARS IN THE MAKING, WASTELAND IS FINALLY GETTING THE SEQUEL IT DESERVES. SO WHAT BETTER TIME FOR IAN DRANSFIELD TO SIT DOWN WITH BRIAN FARGO TO FIND OUT EVERYTHING WORTH FINDING OUT ABOUT THE ORIGINAL?



ELAND

Wasteland, the classic 1988 RPG from Interplay Productions, is *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* in all but name. Not our words, but those of *Wasteland*'s creator Brian Fargo: "The subject matter was my ode to *The Road Warrior* – I was obsessed with that film when I was a teenager." Though the initial inspiration didn't stop there: "Anything post-apocalyptic," Brian continues, "*The Omega Man*, with Charlton Heston… it was fantastic. And not just post-apocalyptic – anything where man ended – *Twilight Zone* episodes, *Outer Limits* episodes, a book called *SwanSong*, *Commandy The Last Boy On Earth*, a comic series that I read. I don't know what it is – some psychologist could perhaps analyse me, but I just loved the category."

The game was ambitious for its time, offering players an early slice of open-world exploration, free reign on how to develop their characters and a storyline that skipped gaily between the horrific and hilarious on a second-to-second basis. Even so, it wasn't tough to get the idea over at publisher EA: "We had done *Bard's Tale* – a big success with the first game, and *2* was out at that time, so I basically had some latitude to do something interesting," Brian explains, "so I wanted to do something post-apocalyptic. We were trying to figure out what system worked – I really liked something that was kind of obscure, [a tabletop RPG] called *Mercenaries, Spies And Private Eyes*.

"So we worked out a deal to work with the system from *Mercenaries, Spies And Private Eyes*, and with some of the talent – Ken St Andre, Michael Stackpole and Liz Danforth – so the team really started from that pen and paper role-playing game." Though there was, of course, experienced programmer talent too: "I had my own guys internally – most of my talent I found back then were all software pirates. Hackers today, but back then there was no real hacking to do, so everyone was a software pirate and trying to crack stuff. So I got my crack team of software crackers with my designers up in Arizona, and that's how the team came about."

But things weren't all smooth sailing during *Wasteland*'s development – it was hard work for the team, and while Brian maintains the brass was supportive of the endeavour, it took a lot out of those involved: "One of the issues was it took us four years to make the game… We spent a lot of time on it. I think EA knew I was pretty passionate… I was fortunate that EA was a good publishing partner for us – they got what I was trying to do and they gave me the leeway to do it.

"I remember at the end it was painful because our producer left, or something, and they gave us a new producer towards the end, and he had all new ideas," Brian smiles as he recalls. "We'd be having these conversations where he'd be like 'I was up in the mountains and there was that one area where you find the bag of silver – I think it should be gold', I was just 'we're not having this conversation – I don't care, you might even be right, but we're done! It's been four years, I'm not doing this anymore'."

That's not to say Brian and his staff didn't care throughout development, of course – *Wasteland* was a labour of love for all those involved. It's clear from how he still talks about the game that Brian truly loves it and the ideas it brought to the table. Well, *from* the table, to the home computer. "I've always liked when the world can behave as realistically as possible – and I love taking things to the ridiculous conclusions. I just love that," he explains.



» [PC] You'll get attacked by a number of dangerous foes on your travels.

"In the first game, the moment that people remember the most… was with the rabid dog. A boy was looking for his dog, you'd been attacked by a rabid dog – it's just another enemy to you, you kill it – and then the kid's like 'you killed my dog!' Games hadn't really done much of that by that point, where they made you feel bad.

"So there was the making you feel bad aspect which I think was really important, then the second pillar was that the kid's shooting at you and you're adults with Uzis – you can walk off the map – but people, being who they are, would shoot the kid. Then the other kids would come out – 'you killed Bobby!' – and then you shoot them, then the Red Ryder would appear and the party would get annihilated. But it kept getting worse. I think those were the two elements – the emotion and the rabbit holes together are what made that thing work."

But that freedom – that forward thinking style of development – was another hurdle for the team, and one that Brian still winces at when recalling: "It was a pain. You never know who was first, but it seems like *Wasteland* was one of the first real open-world games where you did things and it had a ripple effect on other events. Most of the RPGs at that time were hub-based – go, do a mission, come back, get a reward, hub, mission, reward – that was the basic structure. We wanted to do something more along the lines of what we did. What was difficult was that every square you stepped on was a program. Every single square we had to write code for, and that was a major pain in the ass.

"That was the major complexity, the fact that each square had to be programmed," Brian continues, "and just the lack of disc space ▶

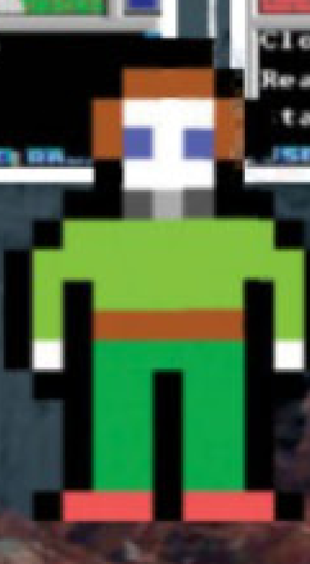


IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
» **DEVELOPER:** INTERPLAY PRODUCTIONS
» **RELEASED:** 1988
» **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS
» **GENRE:** RPG



» [PC] The playing area is huge with lots to encounter. Look out for enemies.





» [PC] Churches are always a good place to rest in RPGs. *Wasteland*'s is no different.



» [PC] You start off with four party members but can have up to seven.

– discs were 140K, or 170K – and I remember going to EA trying to get two discs, being told 'that's a big cost to goods increase, that's another two bucks, we can't do it'. Getting them to go to another disc was a major debate, that was a big deal." It would seem Brian won the debate, mind, as *Wasteland* arrived on two to four discs, depending on the machine it was played on.

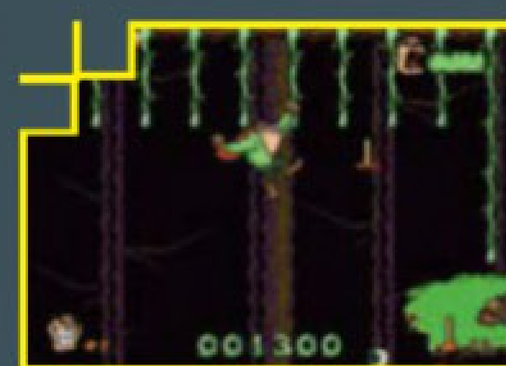
But that need to count the pennies hurt *Wasteland* in the long run: "They released *Bard's Tale 3* and *Wasteland* in the same week, which did not help," Brian tells us, "they wanted to make their quarter, which really made me upset, like 'I've been on it four years, you can't wait another month?' But they just had to do it that month, and that hurt it. It really did." The game reviewed well and sold enough, but it wasn't a world-beater – "nowhere near something like *Baldur's Gate*," Fargo offers as a rough example.

But this veers dangerously close to negativity on a project that Brian – and many of those involved in it, as evidenced by their eventual return for the sequel – holds in incredibly high esteem. And a big part of *Wasteland*'s timeless appeal arguably comes down to its unique use of one particular asset. "We used real writers," Brian says. "Back then a lot of people working on their games would do their own writing – that was okay, you never got criticised or judged for your own writing, which is normally not very good. But I brought a bunch of real writers on board and they think in more nuanced terms and more character-building, and more moral dilemmas. Really it was from that decision that made it special. It always comes down to the writing."

And while the scribes didn't program the individual squares as needed, they did have a good deal of input into the countless memorable moments fans of *Wasteland* like to chat about. Fargo made no secret of his fondness for this approach to creating games: "I really liked that it was different writers that approached it. I'd lay out the parameters, but it's like the Blind Man and the Elephant – each one feels something a little bit differently. Liz's approach to a map would be completely different from Mike's, but you'd start to find patterns that really worked and you'd like the fact that when you were playing the game nothing ever felt the same because it was literally by different people, you'd just create a cohesiveness through it all."

This use of the writing talent even stretched to physical goods, with a companion paragraph book necessary to make progress through the game. As there wasn't enough space on the discs to store all of the required text, players would refer to it as they made their way through the world. But it wasn't all as it seemed. "First we put the paragraph book together straight up, just straight paragraphs," Brian chuckles, "then we thought 'I don't want them cheating – I don't want them looking ahead and figuring out all the passwords. Let's put a bunch of bogus red herring stuff in – not just bogus but when you type it in we kill you for it'."

A successful title *Wasteland* was, but Brian was refused the 'modest' sum for a follow up from EA, and took his business elsewhere – leaving behind the licences for games he and his team had created. A *Wasteland* sequel, in the true sense, never actually materialised back then – though there were plans. "I did *Meantime*," Brian explains, "which was not technically a sequel but it was going to be the same structure, the same engine, for lack of a better word – I could barely



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE BARD'S TALE
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1985

DRAGON WARS
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1989

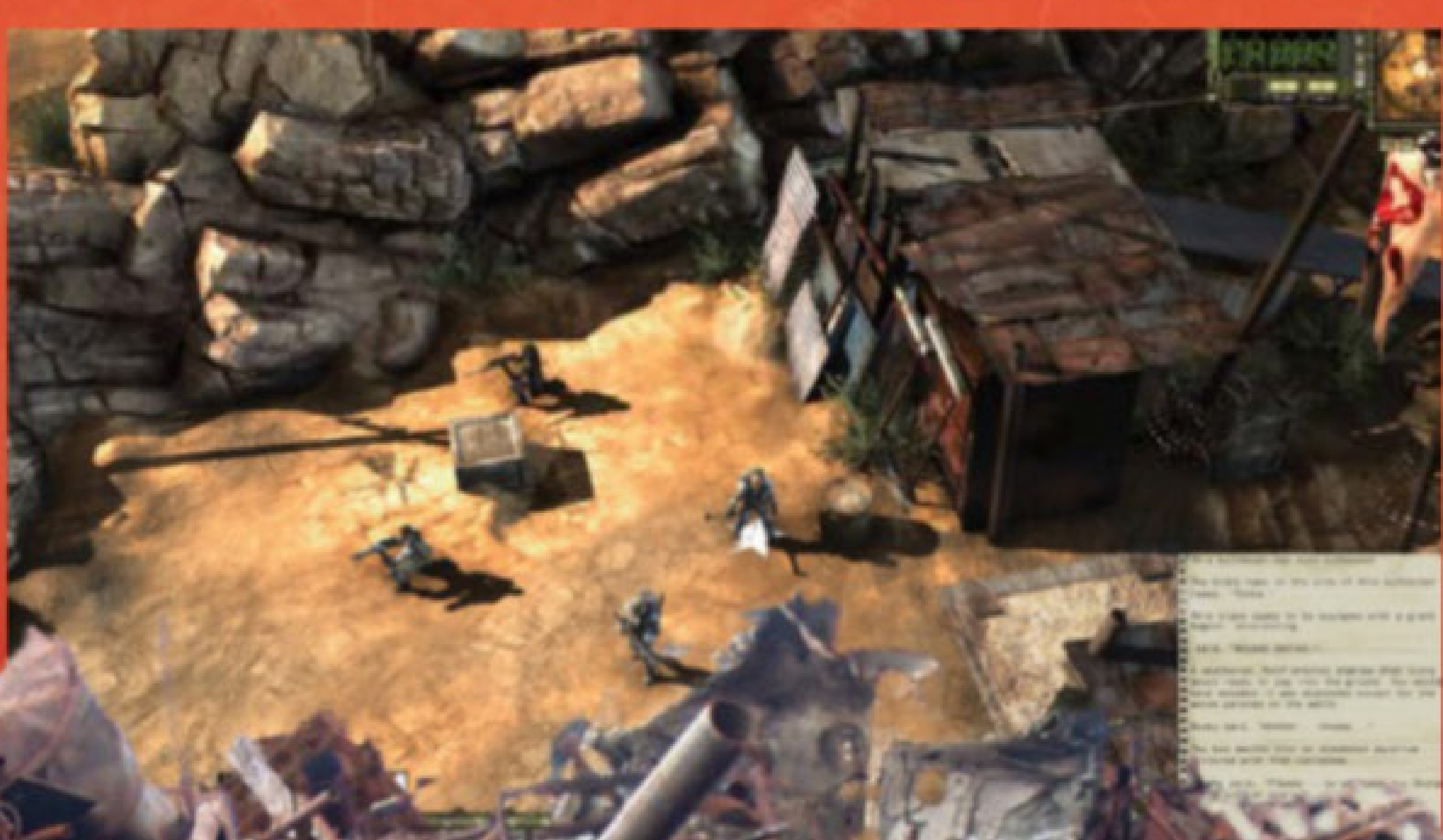
BOOGERMAN (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1994

20 YEARS IN THE MAKING

How does Wasteland 2 fare after such a long wait?

Part homage to the original – which Brian Fargo clearly thinks was overlooked in its time – part classic-styled PC RPG with all the modern trappings that make it a bit more convenient (though not easier), *Wasteland 2* is just about everything a fan of the original – as well as a fan of the first two *Fallout* games – could want. In short: it's brilliant.

It's a gigantic game – not necessarily in square miles, though there's plenty of those – with the sheer weight of content being so much that no individual behind the creation of the game knows everything that can happen in it. You literally will not see everything it has to offer. Unless you play it for 20 years solid, by which time *Wasteland 3* might be out. Highly recommended for Rangers old and new.



"THEY RELEASED BARD'S TALE 3 AND WASTELAND IN THE SAME WEEK, WHICH DID NOT HELP. THEY WANTED TO MAKE THEIR QUARTER, WHICH MADE US UPSET" Brian Fargo



» [PC] Player attributes were inspired by tabletop RPGs such as *Tunnels & Trolls*.



» [PC] Sooner or later you'll succumb to the dangers of *Wasteland*. Time to start over.

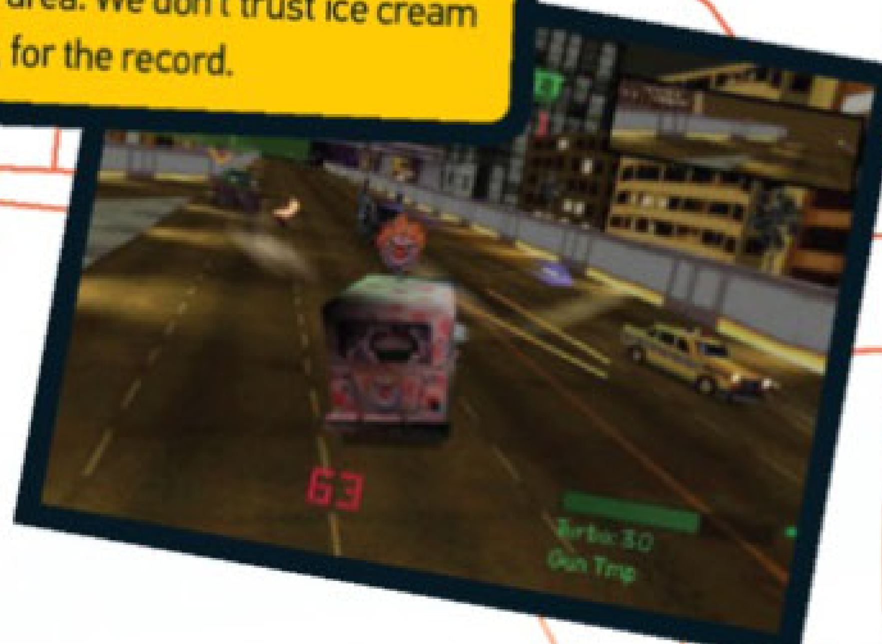
NUKIN' USA

Just where are the nuclear hotspots that the maniacs have blown up throughout gaming's alternative histories?

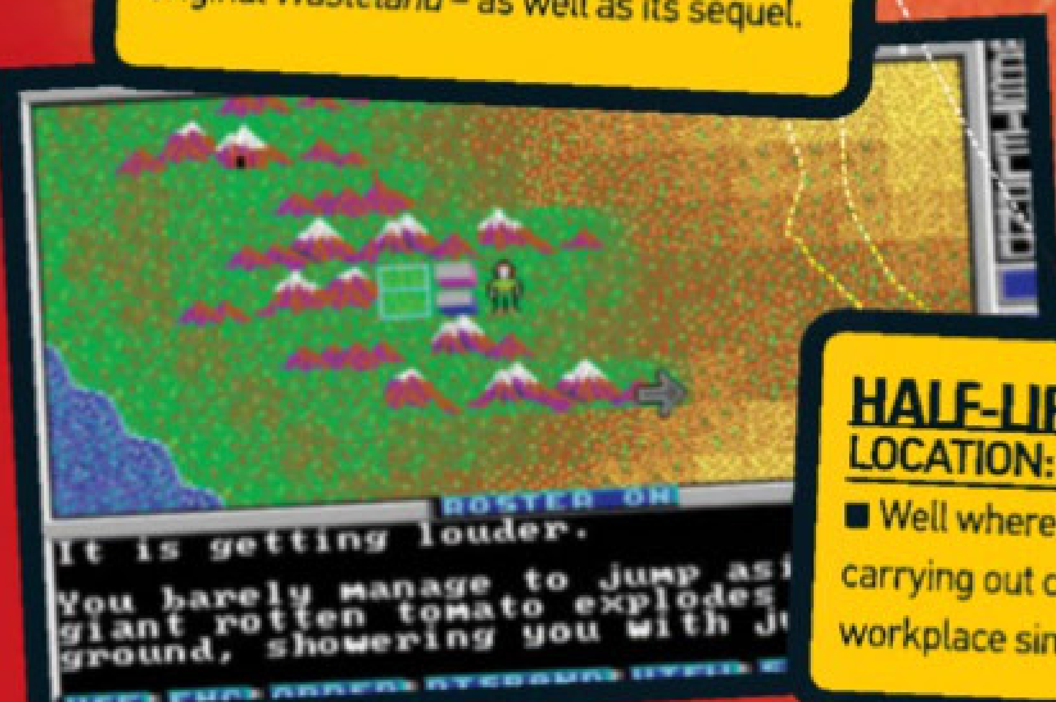


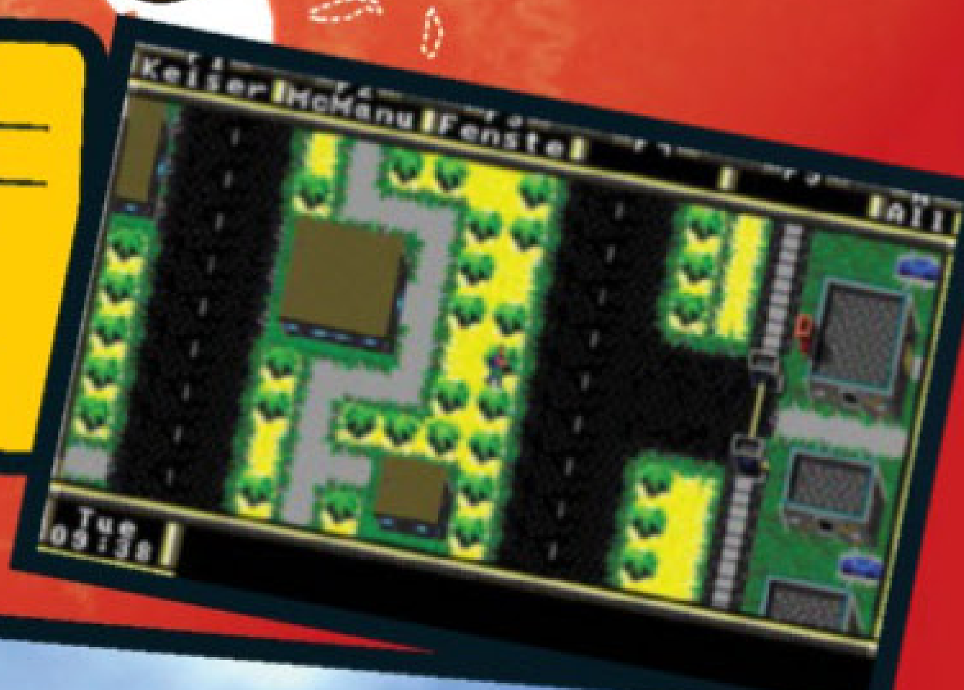












FALLOUT
LOCATION: Southern California

■ For Brian and co's spiritual sequel to *Wasteland*, the action moved a bit further west in the US and stayed in the general area for the sequel.

ABOMINATION: THE NEMESIS PROJECT
LOCATION: Ohio

■ Pretty much everyone in the US is dead thanks to a rampant plague. Fortunately a team of supersoldiers is formed in Ohio, of all places, in order to fight back against the infection.

FALLOUT 3
LOCATION: Washington DC

■ Bethesda's take on *Fallout* made a real statement of intent by moving the action from the west to the east coast. Thankfully, *New Vegas* took it back west again.

TWISTED METAL
LOCATION: Los Angeles

■ The second game might have taken it worldwide, but the original car combat title on PSone was set in and around the Los Angeles area. We don't trust ice cream trucks in LA, for the record.

WASTELAND
LOCATION: Arizona

■ It's not exactly a like-for-like map, but the general area of Arizona (already pretty inhospitable pre-bomb) is recreated in the original *Wasteland* – as well as its sequel.

DEUS EX
LOCATION: New York

■ While the story of JC Denton takes place the world over, its most famous level – that being the first one – takes place in New York.

HALF-LIFE
LOCATION: New Mexico

■ Well where else would you put a high security laboratory capable of carrying out civilisation-destroying experiments? Gordon Freeman's workplace simply wouldn't fit in Des Moines, Iowa, for one thing.

FOUNTAIN OF DREAMS
LOCATION: Florida

■ EA's 'it's not a sequel to *Wasteland*, honestly' title was poorly received, though it's doubtful that's down to the fact it was set in the Sunshine State.

call it an engine – it was the same code, I should say.

"A time travelling game – you talk about cause and effect? Throw in time travel if you really want to get your brain hurt. It was going nowhere, it was too much, the writers were taking too long so I canned it. Then EA said they were going to do a sequel without me, they didn't need me for a sequel – I said 'great – I get a royalty!' They would actually have to pay me, they were doing a sequel without me but I'd at least get a taste. I think that's why they called it *Fountain Of Dreams*, so they didn't have to pay me. Kind of ironic, because I'm glad they didn't – they would have hurt the franchise, because *Fountain Of Dreams* was not received very well."

And if it was a 'true' *Wasteland 2*, we might not be where we are today. With a legacy lasting decades and popularity of such a level, the sequel's Kickstarter crowdfunding success was never in doubt. It's no surprise that Fargo is proud of what he and his team did with *Wasteland*. "From a pride perspective [I'm happy] that it's recognised for being groundbreaking for what it was. Who would think – here we are in 2014 talking about a game that came out in 1988. It's cool, right? I'm proud of that, that it resonated and broke ground in ways that was seen as such." ✱

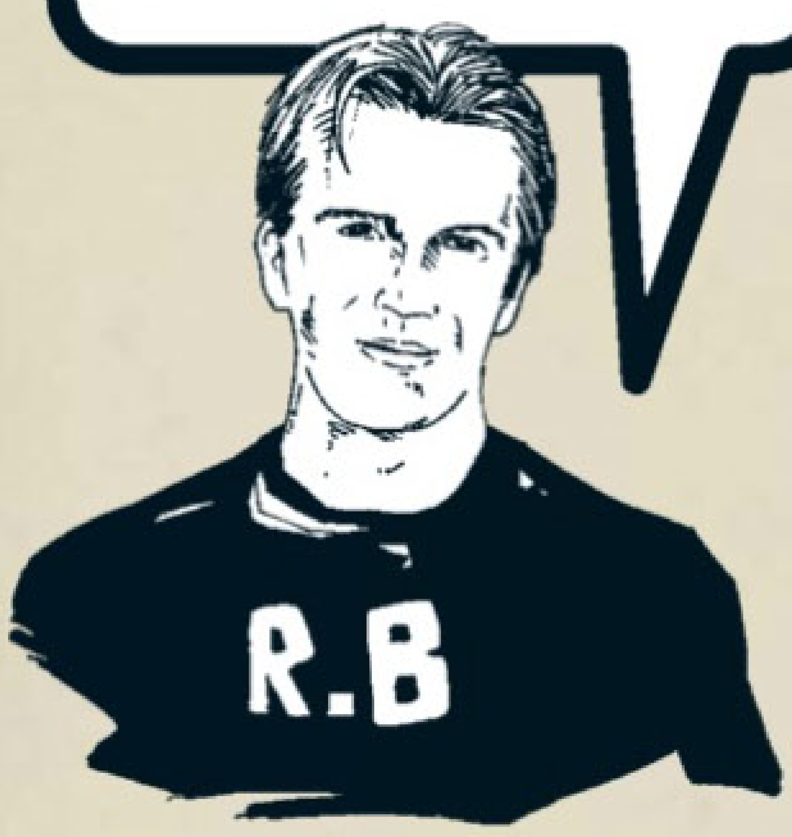


BACK TO THE NINETIES



THE LATEST NEWS FROM SEPTEMBER 1997

SEPTEMBER 1997 – Fallout falls in, Total Annihilation destroys all, Ultima goes online, Tiger launches Game. Com, Blade Runner dreams of a new release, The Fifth Element planned and panned while Frogger jumps onto PlayStation. Richard Burton nurses his squashed frog…



PC owners were about to enjoy a purple patch of gaming with several top drawer releases out this month.

Up first was *Fallout*; the first in what would be an ongoing series of open-world role-playing games. Developed and published by Interplay for Mac and PC, *Fallout* was set in a post-apocalyptic world where thermonuclear war had destroyed every major city. The people that remained survived in fallout shelters called Vaults.

Your objective was to replace a damaged Water Chip that controlled water purification in your Vault. Without it the water became contaminated and you all died. Complete that task in the given timeframe and you then had the not inconsiderable job of stopping a mutant army invasion.

A real strength to *Fallout* was that you could decide the balance between diplomacy and combat. You could negotiate your way through the game without raising a hand or go for the jugular and kill anything that twitches. *Fallout* was excellent and rated highly with reviewers.

There was more war-themed mayhem with *Total Annihilation*, a turned based strategy game. It would introduce two warring factions, the Core and Arm, who have been at intergalactic war for 4,000 years over the proposed transfer of consciousness from humans to machines. The Core wanted and demanded it, the Arm opposed.

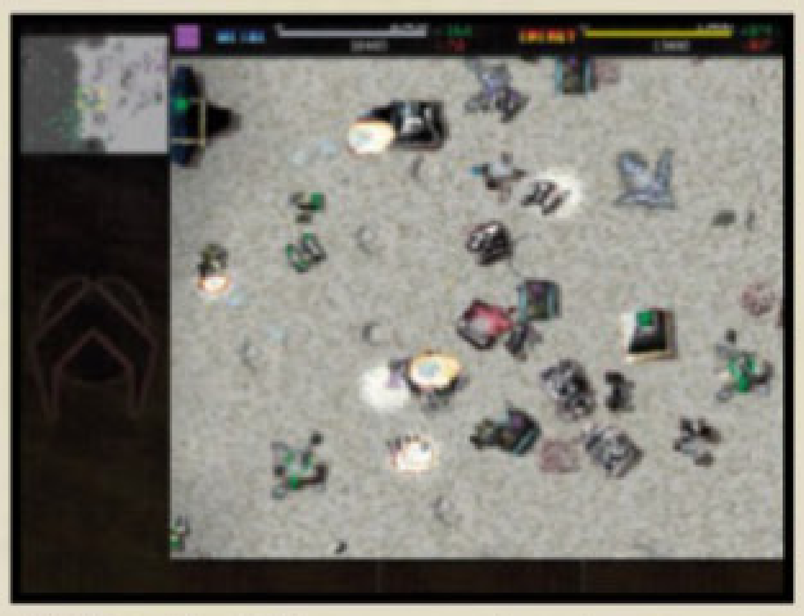
Many elements are touched upon during the game. Construction, resource gathering and reconnaissance must all be undertaken while the combat elements were deep and strategically challenging. You could command either side with the campaigns spread over a hefty 25 different missions with the final mission culminating an attack on the opposing side's homeworld.

Total Annihilation had perfectly balanced levels of combat and strategy while the absorbing storyline added depth to the proceedings. The single-player mode was good but multiplayer mode was sublime, making it arguably one of the best real-time strategy games released on PC.

Origin Systems released its new *Ultima Online* game this month. The massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) was set in Britannia, a typically *Ultima* flavoured environment, where you could create your character and go about your business in a huge open-ended world.

You could play as a warrior or something a little less brutal; either way you would be in good company with *Ultima Online* becoming the first MMORPG to gain 100,000 subscriptions. Six years later it hit its peak of 250,000 subscribers.

Additional booster and expansion packs were added, creating new lands, quests and longevity. *Ultima Online* is still going strong today with



» [PC] *Total Annihilation* was a turn-based strategy game pitting humans against machines.



» [Game.Com] *Batman & Robin* was a pack-in game for Tiger's console. Unfortunately, it was pretty average.

THIS MONTH IN…

COMPUTER & VIDEOGAMES

C&VG reported on the E3 show held in Atlanta highlighting a host of impressive videogaming previews. The PlayStation had *Final Fantasy VII* and *Crash Bandicoot 2*, the N64 had *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* and *F-Zero X* while the Sega Saturn would have *Panzer Dragoon Saga*. Nice.



ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

EGM featured an interview with Shigeru Miyamoto questioning him about a long-mooted *Super Mario 64* sequel. Miyamoto mentioned he was working with programmers on concepts and if they were good, development might begin before the end of the year.



NEXT GENERATION

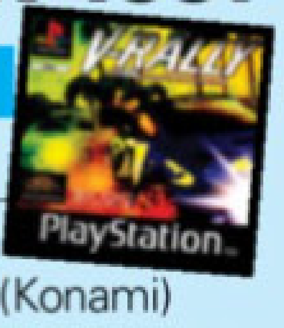
NG spoke to Beam Software who had recently reacquired and launched its former publishing label Melbourne House. It had been sold to Mastertronic which was subsequently bought out by Virgin Games a year later. The Melbourne House name lapsed under Virgin's control and Beam eventually took it back. Hurrah.

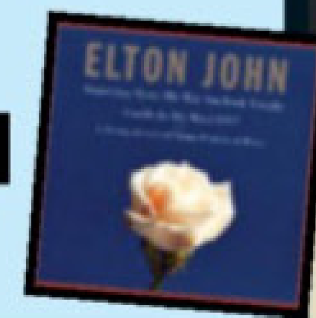




CHARTS

SEPTEMBER 1997



PLAYSTATION	PC	SEGA SATURN	MUSIC
1 V-Rally (Ocean)	**1** Dungeon Keeper (Electronic Arts)	**1** King Of Fighters '95 (SNK)	**1** Candle In The Wind (Elton John)
2 International Superstar Soccer Pro (Konami)	**2** Carmageddon (SCI)	**2** Fighters Megamix (Sega)	**2** The Drugs Don't Work (The Verve)
3 Syndicate Wars (Electronic Arts)	**3** FIFA Soccer Manager (Electronic Arts)	**3** SManx TT Superbike (Sega)	**3** Tubthumping (Chumbawamba)
4 Rage Racer (Sony)	**4** Command & Conquer: Red Alert (Virgin)	**4** FIFA '97 (Electronic Arts)	**4** Men In Black (Will Smith)
5 Fade To Black: Platinum (Electronic Arts)	**5** Theme Hospital (Electronic Arts)	**5** Shining The Holy Ark (Sega)	**5** Sunchyme (Dario G)

SEPTEMBER WORLD NEWS

5 September saw the death of Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu, more commonly known as Mother Teresa. She founded the Missionaries Of Charity, a religious congregation that ran clinics, nurseries, hospitals, hospices and schools worldwide. She died aged 87. She was later beatified to the title of Blessed Teresa Of Calcutta, part of the canonisation process in making her a saint.

6 September saw the funeral of Diana, Princess Of Wales. Her coffin was taken from Kensington Palace to Westminster Abbey by gun carriage before being laid to rest at Althorp, Northamptonshire. An estimated worldwide television audience of 2 billion watched the proceedings.

8 September saw the premiere on American television of *Ally McBeal*, a comedy drama set in the legal world and starring Calista Flockhart in the title role. She played a young lawyer at Cage & Fish, a law firm set in Boston. It proved to be successful and ran for five series spanning 112 episodes.

22 September saw yet another television premiere, a series based on the sci-fi movie *Timecop*. It was cancelled midway through its first series with just nine of the ordered 13 episodes being broadcast.

24 September saw a different story with the premiere of *Dharma & Greg*, a sitcom about two people who are complete opposites but marry after their first date. It was hugely popular and also ran for five series lasting 119 episodes.

a healthy gaming contingent growing and developing their world. The only criticism levelled at *Ultima Online* was that it often suffered from severe lag. However, the varied in-game communities offered plenty of player interaction, both good and bad, negating this mild annoyance.

Tiger Electronics launched its new handheld console, the Game.Com, onto an unsuspecting gaming world with hopes of challenging Nintendo's mighty Game Boy. The gaming world promptly yawned, pointed, laughed and went on with its business. The Game.Com had a small monochrome touchscreen display complete with stylus and was about the size of a Filofax organiser. Coincidentally, the Game.Com also had handy organiser features including a calculator, diary and phone book. Exciting stuff.

There were a few big name games released for it such as *Batman & Robin* (the pack-in game), *Resident Evil 2, Mortal Kombat Trilogy* and *Sonic Jam*. While these licensed offerings sounded impressive, every Game.Com title was created in-house and was consistently poor. There was no third-party software development at all. If pedestrian gaming and pointless features weren't enough, the unresponsive monochrome screen would compound your misery. The graphics were fine when static but as soon as they moved everything blurred. Games were virtually unplayable.



» [PlayStation] *Frogger* arrives on the PlayStation with many wishing it hadn't bothered.

The Game.Com did have a couple of interesting features that seemed misplaced on such a pile of old guff. Tiger ingeniously gave the handheld two cartridge slots for ease of game switching and there was also internet access via a cable connection to a modem. However, this did not make up for Tiger's seriously ill-conceived foray into videogaming.

An update from Westwood Studios on its *Blade Runner* PC game bode well with the project finished and almost ready for release. Based in the *Blade Runner* world of Ridley Scott's movie rather than as a direct interpretation of the movie, the point-and-click adventure cast you in the role of Ray McCoy, another Blade Runner, tracking replicants in a new storyline.



» [PC] *Ultima Online* was a terrific MMORPG in which you and your character could get lost for hours.

Blade Runner was unique with its combination of 3D graphics and real-time progression making it the first of its kind for an adventure. It was very well received when released rating highly with magazine reviewers and later receiving several awards, bucking the trend for an officially licensed movie tie-in game.

Continuing with the movie theme, there was news that the recently released Luc Besson movie *The Fifth Element* starring Bruce Willis was also to become a videogame on PlayStation and PC. It would be a third-person arcade adventure in the style of *Tomb Raider*. Sadly it would be nowhere near as enjoyable as Lara Croft's antics when released in late 1998.

A hit of retro gaming appeared on the PlayStation this month with the release of a freshly updated version of *Frogger* from Hasbro. Gone were the flat 2D graphics of the 1981 arcade original and in came a 3D environment with polished graphics and pleasant music to jolly you along the 38 levels spread across various zones.

Opinion was split on *Frogger* with some stating it was an innovative take on the old favourite while others thought it insipid with its less than perfect jump detection. Given that a version even came out for the Game.Com, we're inclined to sway towards the latter… *



» [PC] Post-apocalyptic gaming has never been more fun.



BATMAN

A VIDEOGAME HISTORY

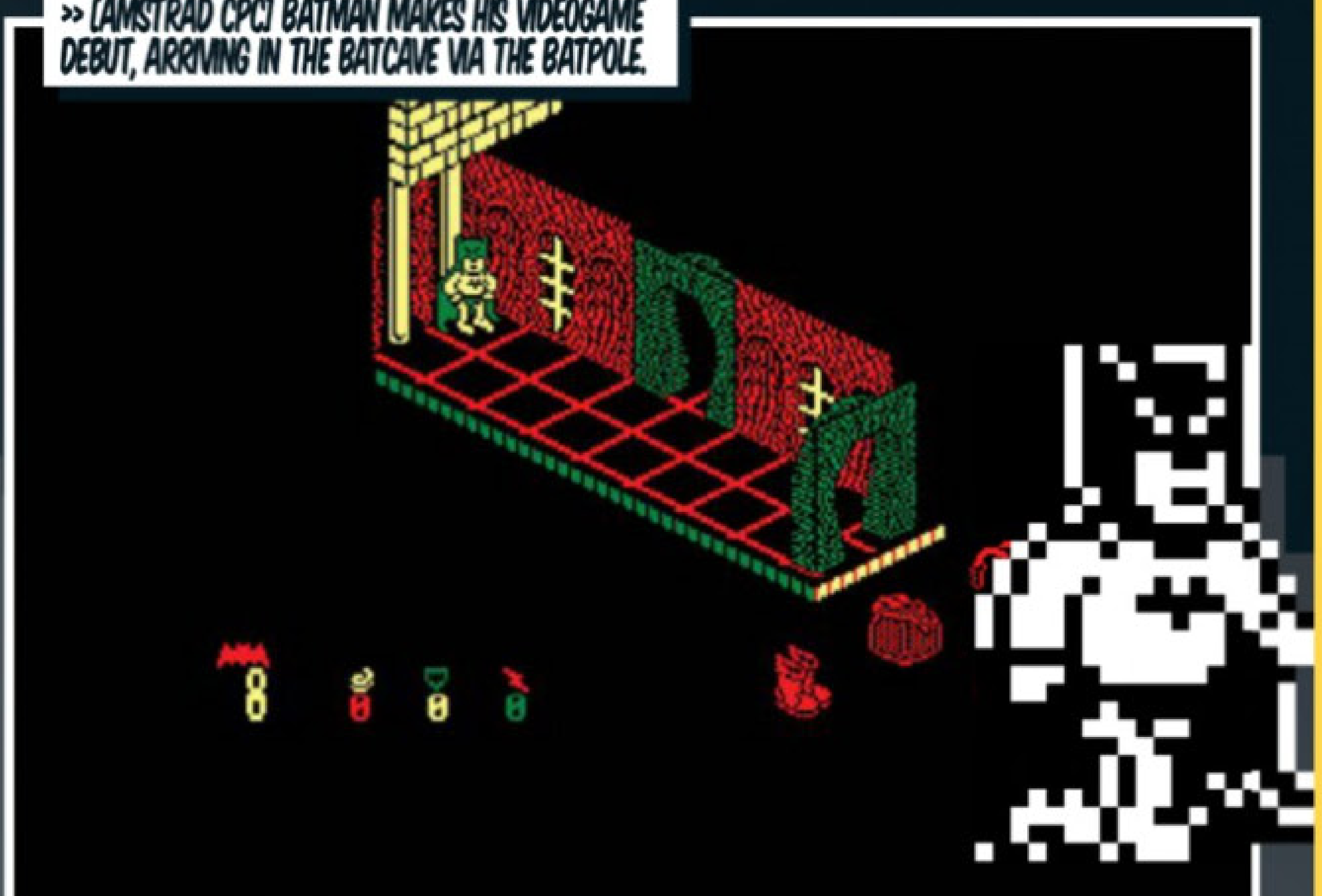
As the comic book hero celebrates his 75th anniversary, Martyn Carroll revisits the vast and varied archive of Batman videogames and separates the good from the bad, the wheat from the chaff, the Keatons from the Clooneys. To the Batmobile!

Gotham. Night. Thugs prowl the streets. Batman emerges from the shadows and cuts a path through the throng, punching and kicking, his dark cape flapping. He flings Batarangs and uses his grappling gun to swing on conveniently placed lampposts and fire escapes, pulling himself up to higher platforms. A level in a factory follows, and maybe one down in the sewers a little later. There'll probably be driving or flying sections too, to break up the monotony, and of course telegraphed boss fights against cackling villains.

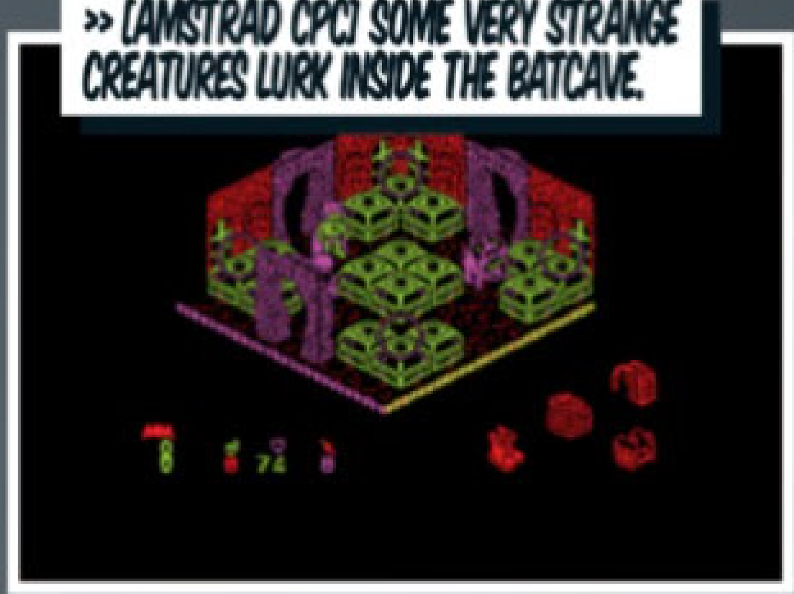
Welcome to the archetypal *Batman* game. Years before Rocksteady Studios stepped up and delivered not just the best *Batman* game to date but one of the finest licensed titles ever in the shape of *Arkham Asylum*, the Dark Knight's videogames were rather less groundbreaking. Many of these games were based on the Warner Brothers movies, beginning with Tim Burton's dark reimagining of the character in 1989, so you could argue that developers didn't have much room to innovate. Both of the Burton films amble along, enlivened by occasional (and spectacular) action sequences, and it was these kinetic scenes that were adapted. Batman duffing up hoods. Batman getting behind the wheel. Batman generally being a badass. The videogames could be characterised by Michael Keaton curling his lip and spitting: "I'm Batman".

Of course outside of the films the character has a long history that extends right back to his comic book creation in 1939 and as such means different things to different people. The first ever *Batman* game, an isometric adventure published by Ocean in 1986, demonstrates this perfectly. Bob Wakelin's cover-art is based on Batman from the Seventies-era comics, all square-jawed and serious. The loading screen, meanwhile, casts the character in a more sinister light. Yet the game itself clearly channels the Sixties TV show, featuring the famous theme tune and a tiny, playable version of Adam West drawn by graphic artist Bernie Drummond. Programmer Jon Ritman reveals that having sussed out the isometric presentation, they looked for a suitable character to drop into their game.

"There was a discussion where I was saying we needed a recognisable hero such as Batman, but I followed this up by saying Batman was no use as it had been >



» [AMSTRAD CPC] BATMAN MAKES HIS VIDEOGAME DEBUT, ARRIVING IN THE BATCAVE VIA THE BATPOLE.



» [AMSTRAD CPC] SOME VERY STRANGE CREATURES LURK INSIDE THE BATCAVE.



» [ZX SPECTRUM] THE CAPER CRUSADER MIMICKED THE COMIC BOOK STYLE, COMPLETE WITH CAPTIONS.

Q&A: MIKE LAMB

The coding ace takes us behind the scenes of Ocean's movie tie-in

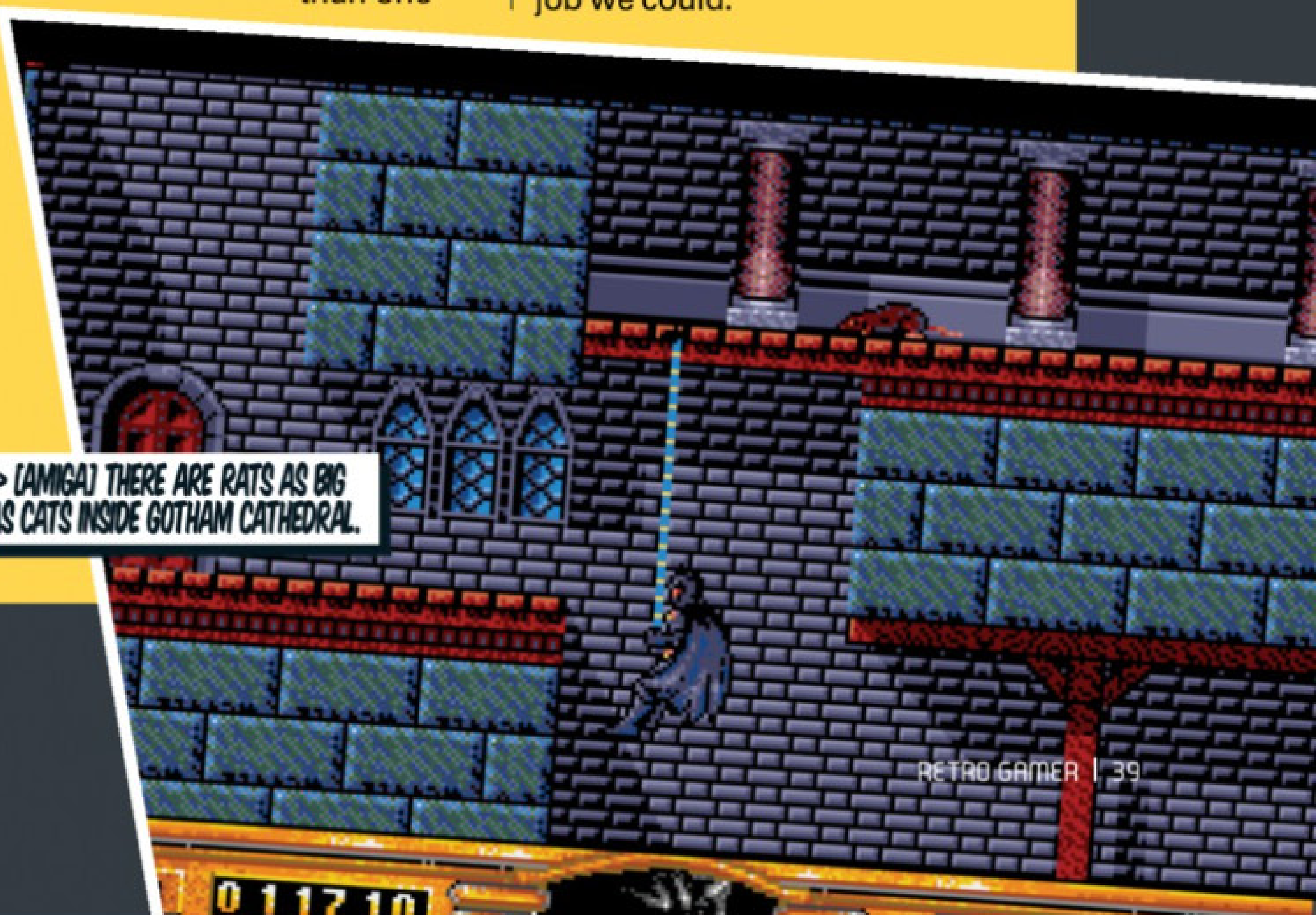


***Batman: The Movie* was similar in look and feel to *RoboCop*. Was that how the project was conceived, as almost a re-skin of *RoboCop*?**
RoboCop was successful and I can see why people would think we were trying to do the same thing again. There might have been a bit of that. Instead of using just one gameplay mechanic we used different styles for different scenes. There was also a lot of pressure on any Ocean movie title to make the release dates and so we couldn't afford to do anything experimental. A lot of them ended up with 'a warehouse level'.

For the 16-bit versions, how were programming duties split between yourself, Jon 'O Brien and Allan Shortt?
I did the platform sections, Jon did the 3D Batmobile and Batwing sections and Allan did the chemical puzzle bit and all the loading and mastering. I think it was one of the first times at Ocean we had more than one programmer on a project. A sign of things to come as games got bigger.

Was the Amiga version the lead version, with the 8-bit versions following after?
It started with the Spectrum but Gary Bracey got a deal with Commodore to bundle it with the Amiga so that became the lead and we went back to the 8-bit versions later. Working on the Amiga was pure joy. Acres of RAM, colour graphics, the blitter. The only downside was that there wasn't a lot of time to play with it.

This was an important game for Ocean. Did you feel pressure to make it extra special as you were working on it?
The pressure kind of built. It started when we went to Pinewood Studios to check out the set. Obviously we were going for work but I couldn't help feeling overawed. Batman was one my childhood heroes. The next time was when the Prince album was released. I went into HMV and where they usually had the top 50, the whole wall was covered in *Batman* LPs! That was when I knew it wasn't just me and a few of my geeky mates. There was a bit of pressure from Ocean but for the most part we were self-motivated and knew the importance of doing the best job we could.



» [AMIGA] THERE ARE RATS AS BIG AS CATS INSIDE GOTHAM CATHEDRAL.



» [AMIGA] EVERY KID WANTED TO TAKE THE BATMOBILE FOR A SPIN AND OCEAN MADE IT HAPPEN.



» [COMMODORE 64] USING A LAMPPOST TO TAKE TIGHT CORNER, JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIE.


» [NES] CLEANING UP GOTHAM'S MEAN STREETS IN SUNSOFT'S FIRST BATMAN GAME.

many years since the Sixties TV series. Bernie told me that the series was being repeated on UK television and lots of kids watched it, and that was it."

Ocean did the deal with DC Comics and the game was released for various 8-bit computers. The financial details of the deal are not known, but you'd imagine Ocean secured the licence for a comparatively small sum compared to when the Warner films took off a few years later. The comic publisher didn't just sign the deal and be done with it, however. "DC did have the right to object to parts of the game," reveals Jon, "but its only intervention was over the description of the power-ups as 'Bat Pills', saying Batman did not take drugs. We changed the name to 'Bat Powers' and everyone was happy."

Ocean released a second *Batman* title in 1988, subtitled *The Caper Crusader*, and once again DC kept a check on content. The game was developed by Special FX and designed by the late Joffa Smith, who shared some details on his old personal website: "DC was very protective towards its image of Batman. We were under strict orders not to use excessive, unjustified violence. That's why robots feature quite heavily as baddies. All of the character graphics had to be approved."

The game was chiefly inspired by the character's comic book tales and this seeped into the visual style: the game cleverly unfolded via series of overlapping comic book panels. There was some action but the emphasis was firmly on adventure, with Batman solving various object-based puzzles and living up to his often-overlooked billing as the 'World's Greatest Detective'. It was a great game and a generous one too, as it was split into two separate parts, one involving the Riddler and the other the Joker.

Ocean's third *Batman* game (or fourth, if you count a finished but unreleased text adventure title) was based directly on Burton's 1989 movie and appeared shortly after the film debuted in cinemas. The firm revisited its mega-successful *RoboCop* licence and conceived *Batman: The Movie* as a multi-stage affair mixing platform, driving and puzzle elements. Some of Ocean's top talent worked on the game – including coders Mike Lamb and Jon O'Brien, and artists Dawn Drake and Bill Harbison – and while the end result lacked the inventiveness of Ocean's earlier *Batman* games, it did a fine job of bringing the movie behemoth to the computer screen.

The game was developed for both 8-bit and 16-bit machines, but it was the lead Amiga version that many will remember as it was bundled with the A500 computer as part of the hugely popular 'Batman Pack'. Ocean's Gary Bracey acknowledges how important the game was for the firm: "It was huge. Not only was it an enormous licence at the time, but I believe the team made a fantastic job of the game itself. The combination of strong licence with great game had a significant impact on sales."

Batman was flying high on home computers yet he was still grounded

HOLY SPRITE DESIGN BATMAN!

The ever-changing face of the Caped Crusader

BATMAN
FORMAT: Amstrad CPC
YEAR: 1986



BATMAN
FORMAT: NES
YEAR: 1990



BATMAN
FORMAT: Mega Drive
YEAR: 1990



BATMAN RETURNS
FORMAT: SNES
YEAR: 1993

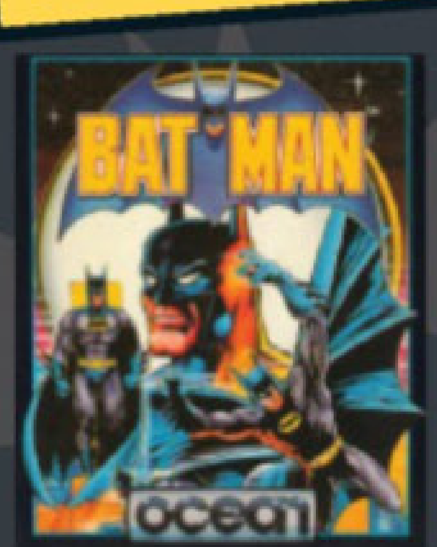


BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT
FORMAT: Various
YEAR: 2015

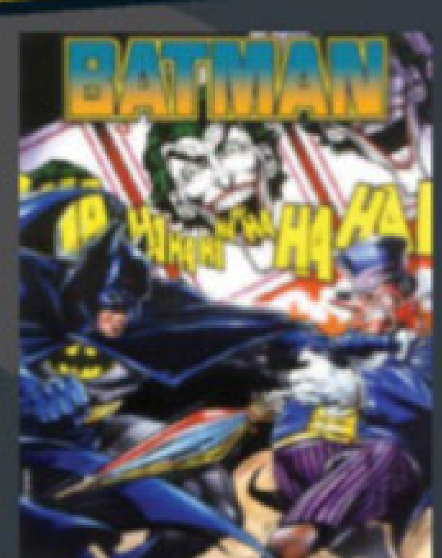


BATMAN TIME LINE

Your instant guide to the Caped Crusader



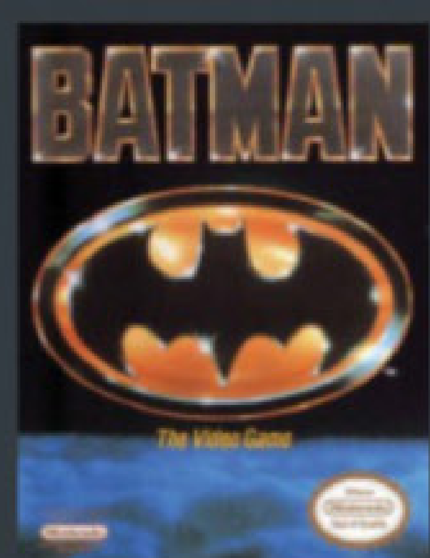
BATMAN
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 1986



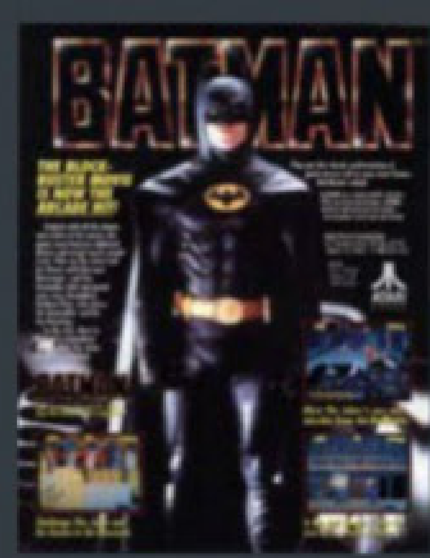
BATMAN: THE CAPED CRUSADER
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 1988



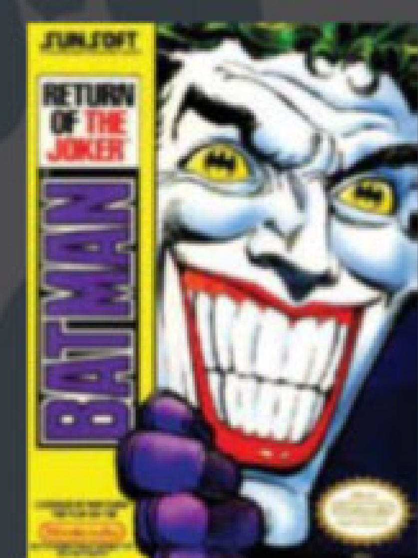
BATMAN: THE MOVIE
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 1989



BATMAN
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 1990



BATMAN
FORMATS: Arcade
YEAR: 1991



BATMAN: RETURN OF THE JOKER
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 1991/2



BATMAN RETURNS
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 1992/3

as far as consoles were concerned. This was duly noted by Japanese developer Sunsoft, who snared the licence and released *Batman* for the NES in 1990. It was – surprise, surprise – a side-scrolling platformer that was only loosely based on the movie. Batman even faced various villains from his comic book past including Killer Moth and Firebug, although the final boss spot was reserved for the Joker (who was able to summon lightning from the sky, obviously).

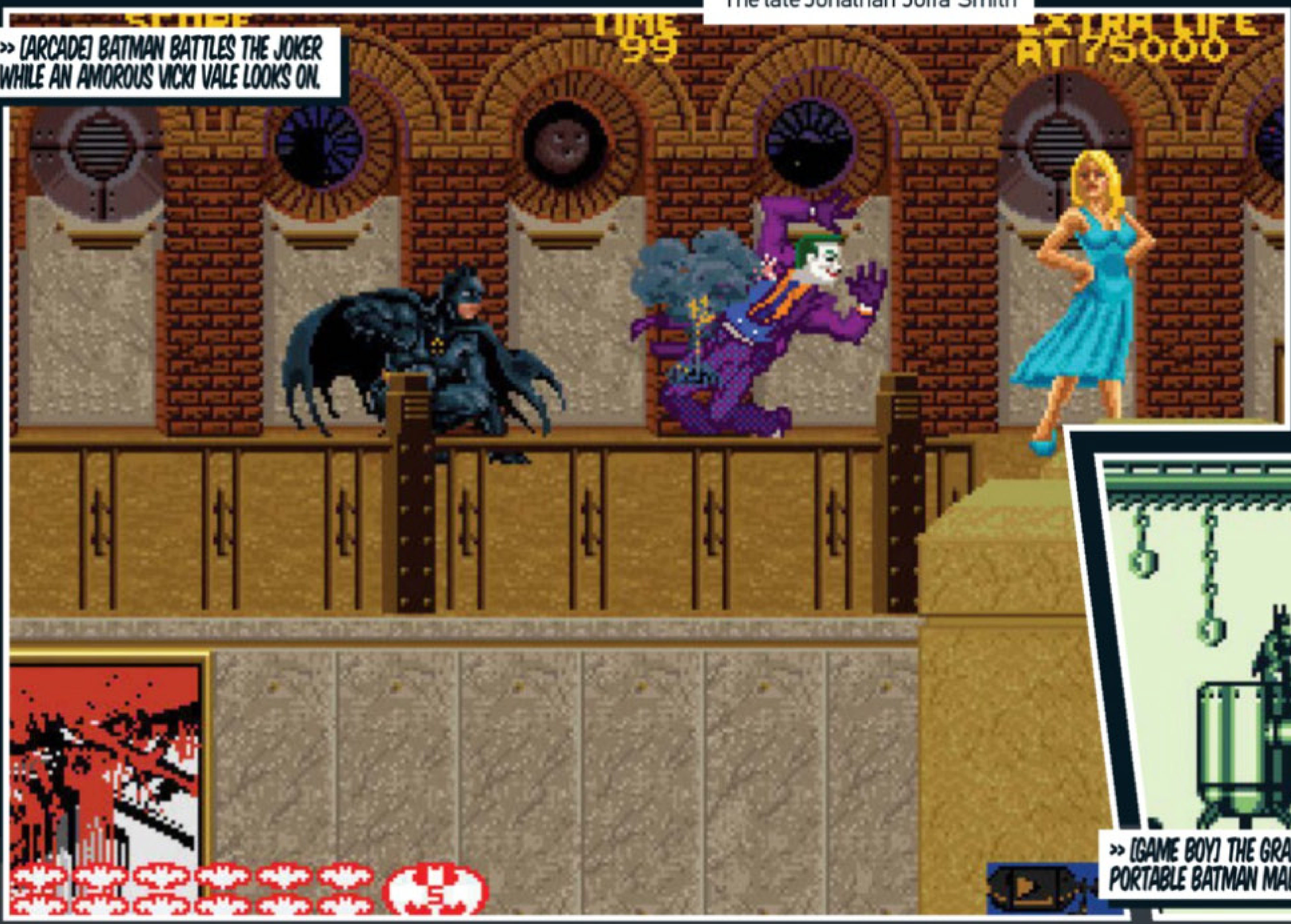
An enhanced version for the Mega Drive followed that was more faithful to the film. It featured improved graphics and sound, and introduced a couple of fun horizontal-shooter stages. The Game Boy also received a version that mixed platforming and shooting, although it had a different look and feel that mimicked *Super Mario Land*. The result was a smart little game with perfect playability, proving that if you're going to unashamedly clone an existing title you should make sure it's a good one. Finally, Sunsoft released a unique version for the PC Engine, despite the fact that the hardware would have surely handled the Mega Drive game. It was essentially an elaborate top-down maze affair that should be commended for doing something different but it was just too repetitive.

In 1991, more than 18 months after the release of the film, *Batman* debuted in arcades courtesy of Atari Games. It's difficult to fathom why it took so long to arrive, as the game was short, glitchy and evidently rushed. Playing like an overblown version of Namco's *Rolling Thunder*, Batman duffs up approximately 1 billion baddies en route to an underwhelming showdown with the Joker. The graphics were large and well done, and the audio included dialogue lifted from the film, but overall Batman's coin-op outing was late and not worth the wait.

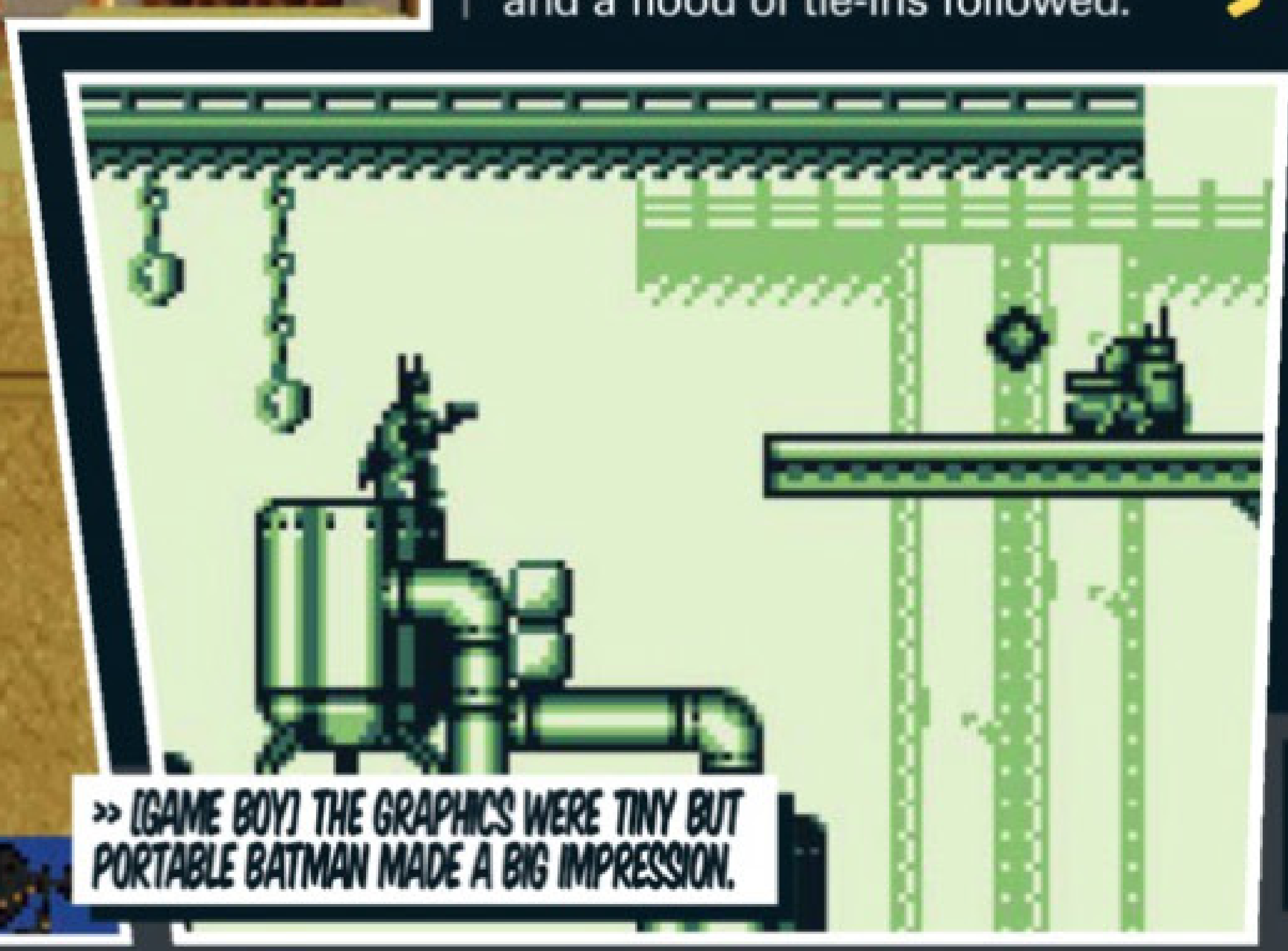
> **"We were under strict orders not to use excessive, unjustified violence"**
> The late Jonathan 'Joffa' Smith

Sunsoft, meanwhile, was not done with the Dark Knight and prior to the release of the second *Batman* movie nipped in with a sequel of its own called *The Return Of The Joker*. If the original *Batman* NES game borrowed heavily from *Castlevania*, the follow-up took its cues from *Contra*. That's right, it was a chaotic shooter in which Batman goes gun crazy, blasting everything in sight. In Japan it was released as *Dynamite Batman* and that title fits it to a tee. The graphics deserve special mention: for a NES game they were stunning, and visually it was more distinctive and technically impressive that the Mega Drive version (released as *Revenge Of The Joker*). As before, the Game Boy received its own game that was more of a straight-up platformer. The graphics were radically improved but in doing so the simple elegance of the original GB game was lost.

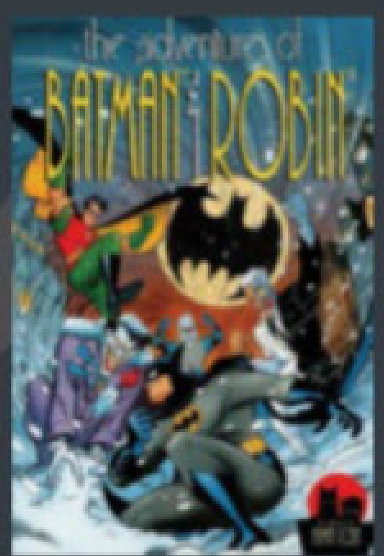
The movie sequel *Batman Returns* premiered in summer 1992 and a flood of tie-ins followed.



» [ARCADE] BATMAN BATTLES THE JOKER WHILE AN AMOROUS VICKI VALE LOOKS ON.



» [GAME BOY] THE GRAPHICS WERE TINY BUT PORTABLE BATMAN MADE A BIG IMPRESSION.



THE ADVENTURES OF BATMAN & ROBIN
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 1994



BATMAN FOREVER
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 1995



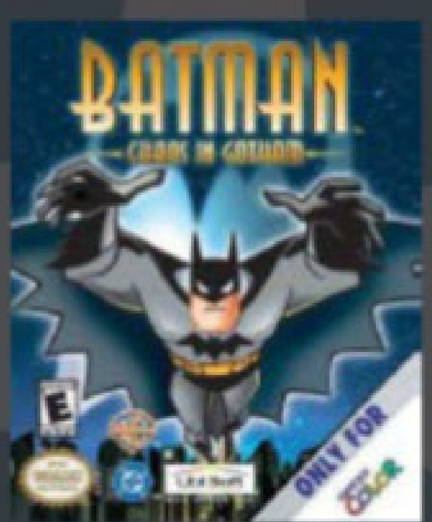
BATMAN FOREVER: THE ARCADE GAME
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 1996



BATMAN & ROBIN
FORMATS: PlayStation, game.com
YEAR: 1998



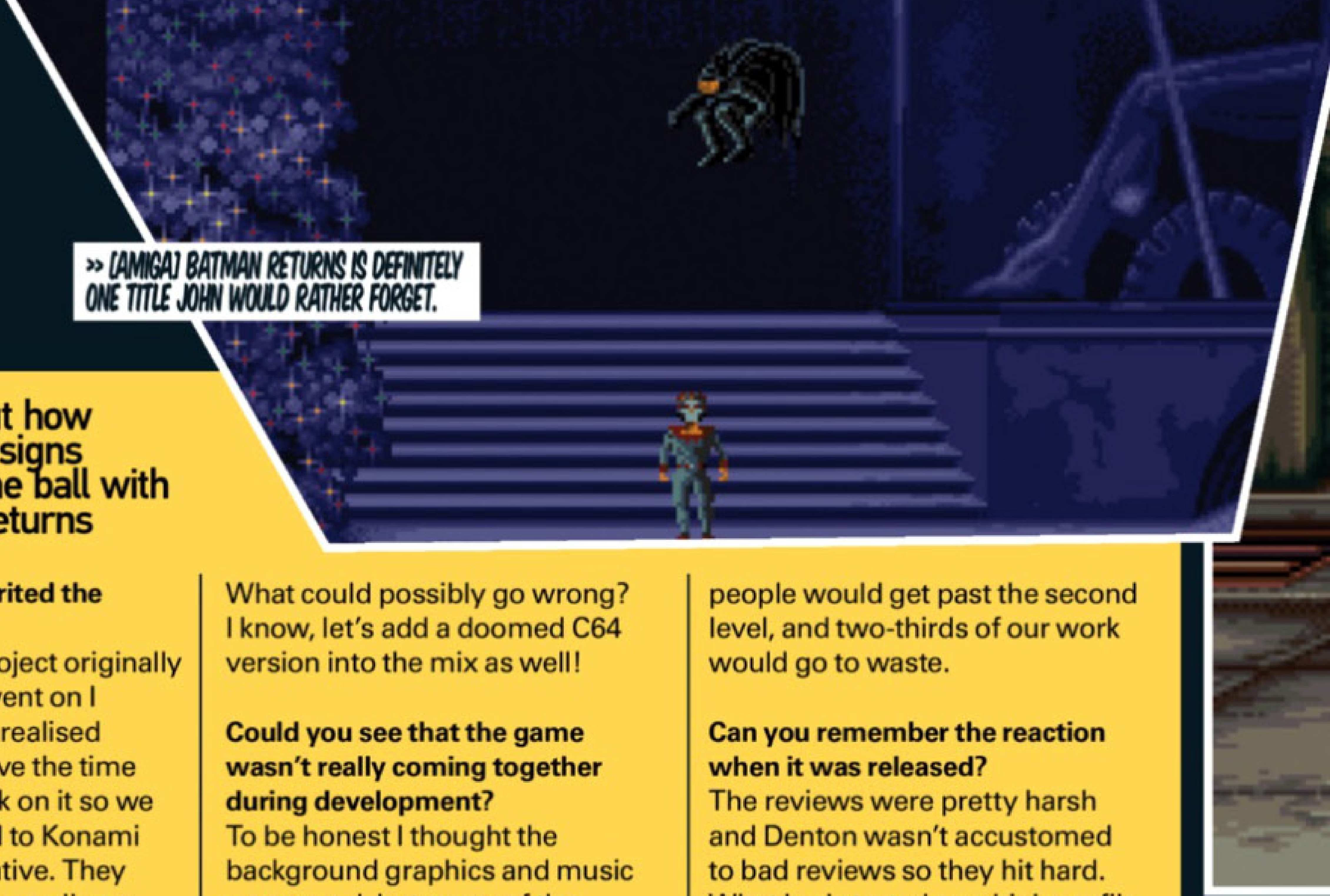
BATMAN OF THE FUTURE
FORMATS: PlayStation, Nintendo 64, Game Boy Color
YEAR: 2000



BATMAN: CHAOS IN GOTHAM
FORMATS: Game Boy Color
YEAR: 2001



BATMAN: GOTHAM CITY RACER
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2001



>> [AMIGA] BATMAN RETURNS IS DEFINITELY ONE TITLE JOHN WOULD RATHER FORGET.

Q&A: JOHN HEAP

We find out how Denton Designs dropped the ball with Batman Returns



So then, tell us about *Batman Returns* on the Amiga.
Ah *Batman Returns*. That wonderful project. Funnily enough I seemed to have wiped most of that experience from my mind, but go ahead and I'll try and remember what went so wrong.

Is it correct you inherited the project from Rage?
Yes Rage had the project originally but as the months went on I think the guys there realised they either didn't have the time or inclination to work on it so we were recommended to Konami as a possible alternative. They hadn't done anything really so they can't be held responsible for the game except that the deadline was still set for the film release so by the time we took over there was hardly any time left. We exacerbated this lack of time by deciding that I should code it. I was a pretty good Spectrum coder but a total novice when it came to Amiga programming. What could possibly go wrong? I know, let's add a doomed C64 version into the mix as well!

Could you see that the game wasn't really coming together during development?
To be honest I thought the background graphics and music were good, but many of the sprites were wooden, including Batman. Still, all would have been forgiven if I'd made the game less repetitive, more responsive and much easier. But that's hindsight for you. At the time of release I actually thought it was good. I could play it so thought others would find it easy. It never occurred to us that very few people would get past the second level, and two-thirds of our work would go to waste.

Can you remember the reaction when it was released?
The reviews were pretty harsh and Denton wasn't accustomed to bad reviews so they hit hard. What had started as a high profile project had turned steadily and inevitably into a disaster. What can I say? Nobody ever sets out to do the worst game ever, but I suppose someone has to do it and this time it was me.

Any positives at all?
Well I think our rocket-firing penguins were good.



>> [GAME GEAR] YOU WAIT AGES FOR A BUS... BATMAN VENTS HIS FRUSTRATIONS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

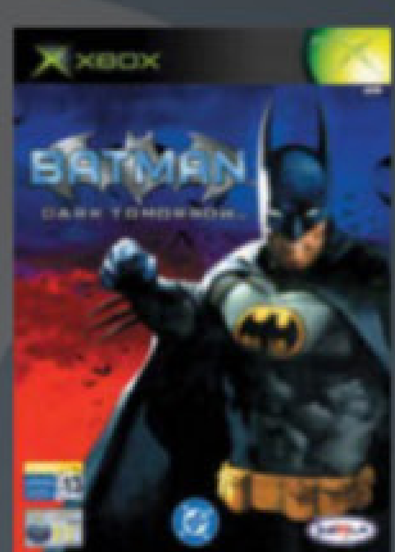
> It's amazing that any other games were released for the remainder of the year as global programming resources were surely ravaged by *Batman Returns*. In total there were nine games for various systems and each was different or unique in some way.

The handheld version for the Lynx, developed by Atari itself and bundled with the Lynx II, can be dispensed with straight away. It was a side-scroller with good gameplay and great graphics, but rendered almost unplayable due to its sadistic difficulty level. The Game Gear received a more successful portable offering, which while still representing a sizeable challenge stacked at least some cards in the player's favour. There were two 'routes' through the majority of stages, one of which offered (slightly) easier passage. Otherwise it was a regular side-scroller with platforms aplenty. The Master System version was very similar, as you'd expect, but oddly inferior, looking rough around the edges compared to its handheld counterpart. It also dispensed with Batman's energy bar in favour of one-hit kills, making the game even more difficult.

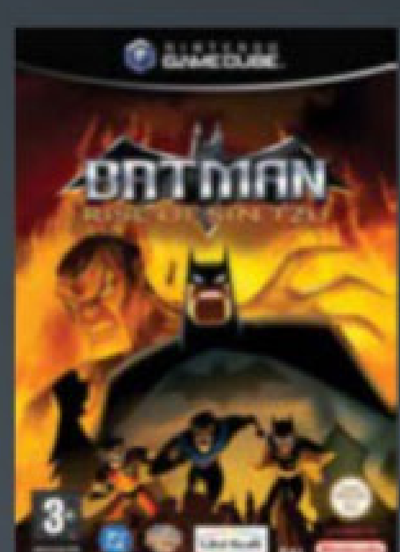
Sega handled the versions for its own machines so all eyes were on the Mega Drive game. The result was a little disappointing in that it was yet another side-scrolling platformer, albeit a very polished one, and it lacked variety compared to Sunsoft's MD games – there were no driving



BATMAN VENGEANCE
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2001



BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2003



BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2003



BATMAN BEGINS
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2003



LEGO BATMAN
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2008



BATMAN: ARKHAM ASYLUM
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2009



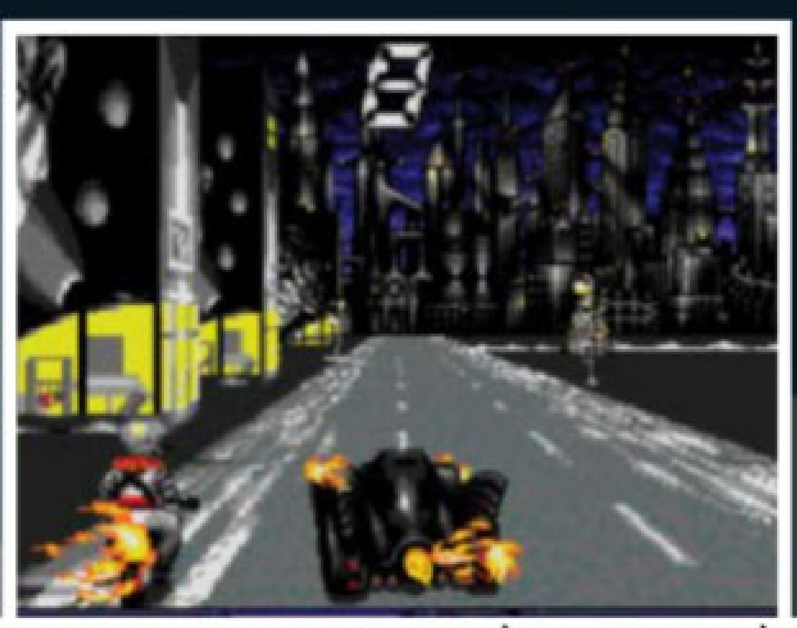
BATMAN: THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD
FORMATS: Wii, DS
YEAR: 2010



» [SNES] GREETINGS GRAPPLING FANS! BATMAN SNAPS SPINES IN STYLE.

or shooting interludes, for example. But one thing the developer nailed was the overall tone. The movie was famously nihilistic for a big screen superhero flick and the game did a great job of capturing that. Gotham never looked gloomier and Batman never looked angrier than in this game. Even his cape looked livid!

The versions for Nintendo consoles arrived in 1993, courtesy of Konami. The aging NES received a beat-'em-up in the style of *Double Dragon* that provided a diverting alternative to the Sunsoft games. The SNES version followed suit, only the graphics were much bigger and the brawling was far wilder. This was Batman doing *Final Fight*, with Bruce Wayne moonlighting as Mike Haggar. It was a great game that would have been truly special had it supported co-op play. The SNES version did boast a 3D Batmobile section – something lacking from the rival Mega Drive game. Sega appeared to take note and released an enhanced version for the Mega-CD that took the MD game and inserted new driving scenes. They were slick and totally thrilling, and it was hardly surprising to discover that they were coded by Jon O'Brien, the man behind the driving sections on Ocean's 16-bit *Batman: The Movie*.



» [MEGA-CD] TEARING UP GOTHAM'S ROADS IN SEGA'S ENHANCED DISC VERSION OF BATMAN RETURNS.

***Batman Returns* also hit computers, appearing on the Amiga and PC. The Amiga version arrived in 1994,** horribly late and horribly executed. It was a beat-'em-up of sorts, hobbled by tiny graphics and frustrating gameplay. The PC version was a complete departure, taking the form of a point-and-click adventure. The intriguing detective angle was hampered by some awkward action sequences but nonetheless this was a refreshing and admirable approach to the licence.

The next batch of *Batman* games were based on the noir-styled animated series that debuted on TV in 1992 and ran for three years. There were two handheld games

COMIC HEROES ASSEMBLE

The classic comic book characters that went digital



BATMAN
NUMBER OF GAMES: 28
BEST GAME: Batman: Arkham Asylum (Various)
WORST GAME: Batman Forever (Game Boy)
EXCITEMENT FACTOR: 9/10



SUPERMAN
NUMBER OF GAMES: 14
BEST GAME: Death And Return Of Superman (SNES)
WORST GAME: Superman (Nintendo 64)
EXCITEMENT FACTOR: 5/10



SPIDER-MAN
NUMBER OF GAMES: 32
BEST GAME: Spider-Man (PlayStation)
WORST GAME: Spider-Man 3 (PlayStation 2)
EXCITEMENT FACTOR: 8/10



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES
NUMBER OF GAMES: 21
BEST GAME: Turtles In Time (Arcade)
WORST GAME: TMNT: Arcade Attack (Nintendo DS)
EXCITEMENT FACTOR: 7/10



WOLVERINE
NUMBER OF GAMES: 5
BEST GAME: X-Men Origins: Wolverine (Various)
WORST GAME: X2: Wolverine's Revenge (Various)
EXCITEMENT FACTOR: 6/10



IRON MAN
NUMBER OF GAMES: 4
BEST GAME: The Invincible Iron Man (GBA)
WORST GAME: Iron Man 2 (Various)
EXCITEMENT FACTOR: 4/10



THE INCREDIBLE HULK
NUMBER OF GAMES: 7
BEST GAME: The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction (Various)
WORST GAME: The Incredible Hulk: The Pantheon Saga (PlayStation)
EXCITEMENT FACTOR: 6/10



JUDGE DREDD
NUMBER OF GAMES: 5
BEST GAME: Dredd Vs Death (Various)
WORST GAME: Judge Dredd (1991) (Various)
EXCITEMENT FACTOR: 5/10



BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2011



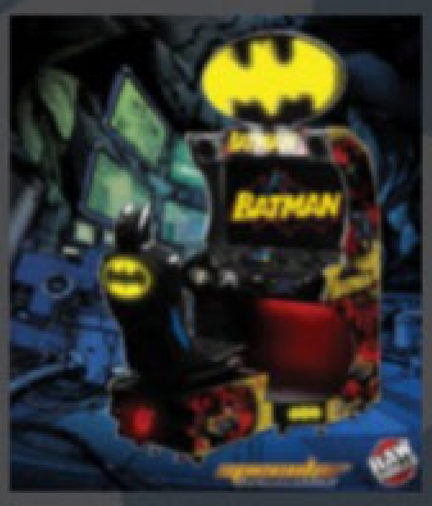
LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPER HEROES
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2012



BATMAN: ARKHAM ORIGINS
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2013



BATMAN: ARKHAM ORIGINS BLACKGATE
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2013/4



BATMAN
FORMATS: Arcade
YEAR: 2013



LEGO BATMAN 3: BEYOND GOTHAM
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2014



BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT
FORMATS: Various
YEAR: 2015



>> [ARCADE] THERE'S NARY A DULL MOMENT IN THE COIN-OP VERSION OF BATMAN FOREVER.





>> [PSONE] GETTING TO GRIPS WITH COMBAT (AND THE CAMERA) IN BATMAN & ROBIN.

>> [PSONE] TAILING TWO-FACE IN THE DECENT GOTHAM CITY RACER. A MORE INCONSPICUOUS CAR MIGHT HELP.





>> [PS2] BATMAN BEGINS OPENS WITH A CRACKING STAGE INSIDE A BURNING BUILDING.

> – *Batman: The Animated Series* for Game Boy and *The Adventures Of Batman And Robin* (the title of the second TV season) for Game Gear – and both were decent platform games in the mould of so many previous *Batman* titles. More appealing were the home console versions, in particular the SNES game which featured stages based around memorable episodes from the TV show. It was filled with fantastic set pieces, such as fighting the Joker on a speeding rollercoaster and negotiating the Riddler's virtual maze.

The Mega Drive game also featured some cool sequences (the Mad Hatter's stage for instance), but overall it was more generic, favouring the run-and-gun approach from the earlier *Revenge Of The Joker* MD game. Visually though, compared to that title, it was hard to believe they were running on the same hardware; it looked so good. There was also co-op support with Batman and the Boy Wonder teaming up – something that was missing from the SNES game. The Mega-CD version was different again, being made up of a series of 3D vehicle stages interspersed with cartoon clips that advanced the story. Fans of the show were certainly well served with three alternative and generally excellent takes on the source material.

" WE WANTED TO DO A SMASH TV TYPE GAME WHERE BATMAN AND ROBIN WOULD FACE OFF AGAINST HORDES OF ENEMIES IN AN ARENA "

Neill Glancy

The third *Batman* movie, *Batman Forever*, arrived in 1995 and more games naturally followed. The main tie-in was an Acclaim game developed by Probe and released for the SNES, Mega Drive and PC, with all three platforms receiving the same unfortunate misfire. Lead programmer Paul Carruthers sheds some light on what he thinks went wrong: "It was going to be a pure platform game, but we soon got a message from Acclaim's marketing department saying that, well, fighting games are popular these days so why don't we make it a fighting game too? And two-player games are always good, so let's chuck that in as well. Hang on – Batman can't fight Robin, so we'll need a cooperative mode. As a consequence of all this we ended up making a hybrid game with rather confused mechanics. We could have done a better job by keeping it as a platformer."

The game is best remembered for featuring en vogue digitised characters á la *Mortal Kombat*. A cut-down yet similar-styled game was released for handhelds (Game Boy and Game Gear) and it was borderline unplayable due to its slow, clumsy nature. The following year Acclaim made amends somewhat by releasing a far better coin-op game. *Batman: The Arcade Game* was a frenzied co-op beat-'em-up where everything was whacked up to 11. "We wanted the game to be exciting and really throw lots of enemies at the players," says lead designer Neill Glancy, who reveals that different game designs were considered. "Initially we wanted to do a *Smash TV* type game where Batman and Robin would face off against hordes of enemies in an arena, but the characters were so small on screen we quickly abandoned it. Next we considered a one-on-one fighting game with the characters all rendered in 3D. The team was really excited about this direction but the Sega Titan hardware just couldn't push enough polys to give us acceptable renditions of the characters. We finally ended up going with a scrolling beat-'em-up. The finished game was solid but it would have been nice to get a bit more pacing variety in there. It's always a constant struggle to do licensed work where you have a hard deadline." The coin-op was ported to the Saturn, PlayStation and PC



>> [ARCADE] BATMAN RECENTLY RETURNED TO ARCADES IN A BATMOBILE RACING GAME DEVELOPED BY SPECULAR INTERACTIVE.



» [XBOX 360] ROCKSTEADY REJUVENATED BATMAN VIDEOGAMES WITH ARKHAM ASYLUM. WHERE WILL IT GO WITH THE UPCOMING ARKHAM KNIGHT?

but definitely worked best as a quick blast in the arcade.

The famously awful *Batman & Robin* movie fouled cinemas in 1997, and perhaps sensing the whiff in the air, publishers didn't rush to release tie-in games. There were just two in fact: the usual platform affair for Tiger's game.com handheld and a surprisingly smart 3D action-adventure for the PlayStation. The PSone game presented the player with an open-world Gotham City to explore and a trail of clues to follow. Programmer David Shea reveals that the team at Probe worked on the game for two and a half years. "The design was hugely ambitious," he says. "We looked at the few *Batman* games Acclaim had already put out and were very disappointed. Where was Batman the crime solver? Where was the Batmobile? Where were the movie set pieces? We wanted the lot. The core team had come off *Alien Trilogy* and we all knew we could get much more out the PlayStation. We did stuff that was way ahead of the competition. Did it hang together as a game? I'm not so sure. The fighting was weak and not much fun, and there was a lot of driving around."

Still, it was by far the best thing to come out of that particular movie, which succeeded in putting the brakes on live action *Batman* films for the best part of a decade. The games continued to arrive, however, with Ubisoft taking on the licence and releasing six games between 2000 and 2003. Of those the best were two based on *The New Batman Adventures* animated TV series: driving game *Gotham City Racer* for PSone, and 3D action title *Batman Vengeance* for PS2, GameCube, Xbox and PC. The 2003 game *Batman: Rise Of Sin Tzu* broke ground by introducing a brand new villain to the *Batman* universe, but the game itself was stuck in a beat-'em-up rut.

When the Dark Knight did return to cinemas in 2005 with *Batman Begins*, Electronic Arts was there with a typically polished tie-in featuring the full voice cast from the film no less. As film licences go it wasn't bad, but it was too linear and too keen to hold your hand. A console game based on *The Dark Knight* was in the works but EA canned it in 2008. No one cared too much, as at roughly the same time the fantastic *Lego Batman* videogame arrived and the following year saw the release of the amazing *Arkham Asylum*. Those two games have spawned their own sequels, and now we have the comedic, satirical side of Batman represented by the *Lego* games, and the grounded, grittier Batman portrayed in the *Arkham* adventures. It really is a good time to be a Bat fan.

It wasn't always that way. There are some *Batman* games that deserve to be thrown from the highest spire of Gotham Cathedral. But as we've seen, there are some fantastic titles too. And even the many archetypal *Batman* games that play it safe and do absolutely nothing special, well they all still have that one crucial element. You are not playing some random cop or nameless vigilante. You are playing Batman, a character with great history and lore. ★

» [XBOX 360] BATMAN AND THE GANG HAVE TRANSLATED REALLY WELL INTO THE LEGO WORLD.



Q&A: IAN BALL

The lead designer of Arkham Knight reveals what we can expect from the hotly-anticipated title



What's the earliest *Batman* game you can remember playing?

Batman: The Movie. Taking 90-degree corners at high speed using the winch and a lamp post. Genius idea.

How will the new generation of consoles improve the *Arkham* series?

The new-gen consoles allow us to push everything further. The entirety of Gotham City is now available as your playground with more people and vehicles in the city, all realised in stunning detail. We have more dynamic events happening, all at the same time, pulling the player deeper into the chaos of Gotham.

Has Batman been gifted with any new gameplay mechanics since *Arkham Origins*?

He has new gadgets and new moves, plus a brand new suit. There is also the small addition of a two-ton, all-terrain Batmobile.

How will the Batmobile be integrated into the gameplay?

The Batmobile is integrated into every part of the game. While exploring the city you can seamlessly eject out of the Batmobile and soar into the sky to get a bird's eye view of the anarchy unfolding in the streets. It is with you at all times – just one button press and it will come skidding around the corner to pick you up. You can control the Batmobile remotely, working together with it to solve puzzles. It's the ultimate support vehicle.

Will the combat system be improved over previous versions?

The combat system has been improved with lots of great features added and new enemy types to take on. Batman can now take weapons from enemies, use throw counters to send thugs flying across the room and use environmental objects to take down any remaining bad guys.

Why do you think Batman works so well in videogames compared to his peers?

He's a man trained to physical perfection, a master of combat and stealth, the world's greatest detective who has a supply of cool gadgets to back him up and the best car money can buy. He doesn't need super powers to go head-to-head against the rogues gallery of villains that want to destroy Gotham City. However, he has an element of vulnerability and any night could be his last. All it takes is one bullet.

» THE BATMOBILE WILL BE DRIVABLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE ARKHAM SERIES.



Alien Crush

I, FOR ONE, WELCOME OUR NEW PINBALL OVERLORDS

» RETROREVIVAL



» PC Engine » Naxat Soft » 1988

I've always been a little confused by developers that choose to create realistic pinball games. I get the appeal of recreating existing tables – after all, very few people have the cash or space to own *Tales Of The Arabian Nights* – but making original video pinball tables to the same constraints as a physical table confuses me. Developers have the freedom to go nuts, adding freely moving elements, extra sub-tables and all sorts of crazy things. Games like *Alien Crush* are the ones that manage to get me far more excited.

I didn't pick up *Alien Crush* until almost 20 years after it had been released, due to the PC Engine's unfortunate failure to make it to the UK market, but when I finally did it still retained the power to impress. The alien-themed table is simply fantastic to look at and the bonus games, which take place off the main table, are a good test of skill. I'm particularly keen on the aliens that spawn in the lower part of the main table and begin to move around – it's still a neat touch that is really jarring the first time you see it. I didn't have any other PC Engine games to begin with, so I got pretty good at it as I waited for a shipment of shoot-'em-ups from Japan. Well, at least I *thought* I was pretty good – as I'm writing this, I've just seen a video of a friend scoring twice my best. Time to dig out the console, then… *





SOFTAID

In 1985, videogame compilations were still something of a rarity, and charity compilations were even more rare – read: non-existent. Graeme Mason speaks to the man behind the cassette that changed all that

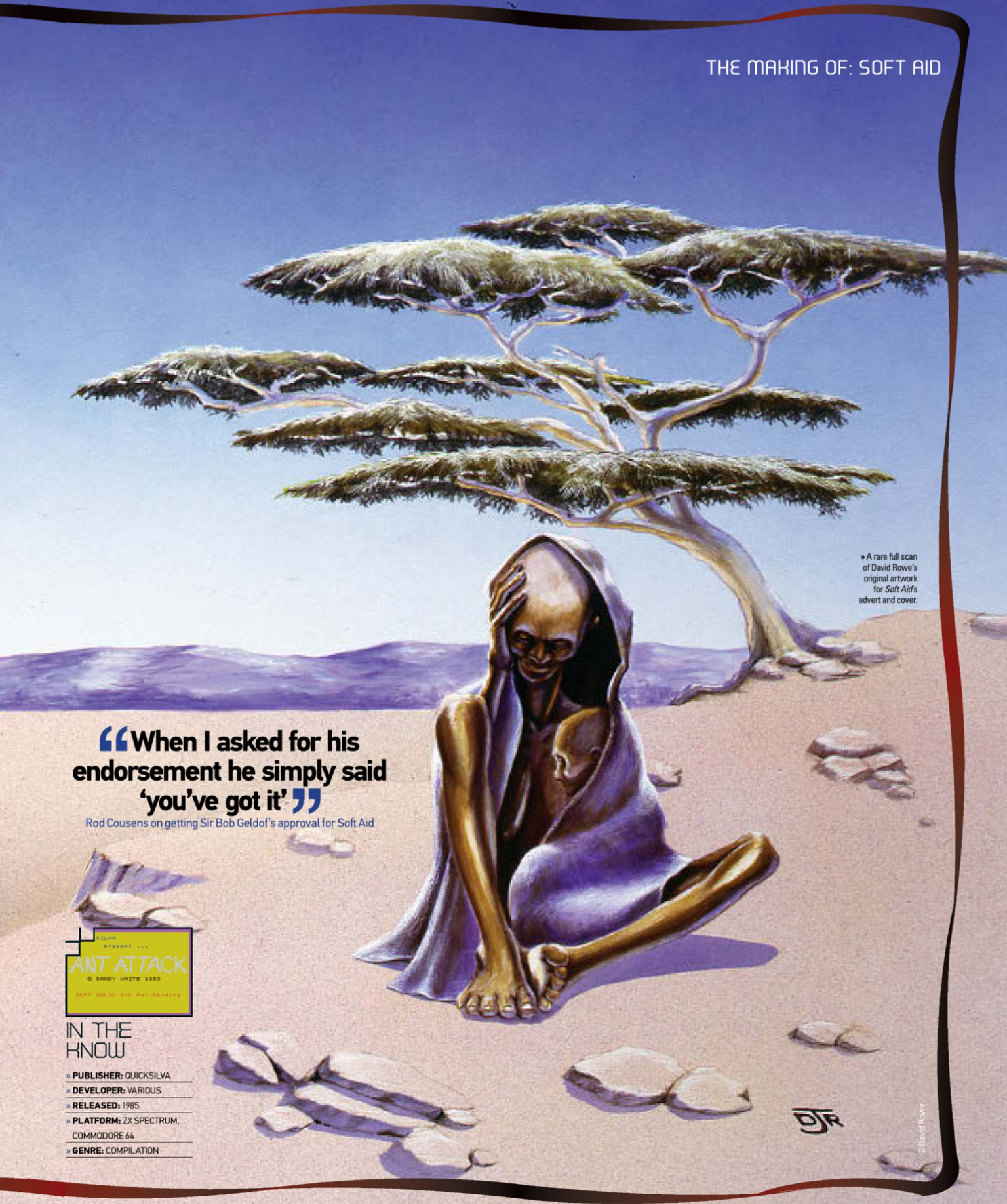

» Rod Cousens today.

Chances are that if you watched any television during the mid-Eighties you would have been left shocked and guilt-ridden at images transmitted from Ethiopia where a food crisis of catastrophic proportions was occurring. The famine's origins could be traced back to earlier in the decade when multiple droughts eradicated a series of crops and the implications of this was enhanced by the political situation in Ethiopia, with the country's Marxist military regime fighting a vicious civil war and prioritising supplies to its army and purportedly using its funds to buy weapons. By 1984, and with another poor harvest a certainty, aid agencies such as Oxfam were predicting up to 6 million people were at risk from starvation and related diseases.

The Western governments, perhaps deterred by Ethiopia's political leanings, were slow to react to the crisis. In September 1984, Oxfam attempted to show the way by giving £500,000 to the Ethiopians (at the time the charity's largest single donation), despite reservations from some relief agencies on where the money would be channelled. Through increased media coverage, public donations rose hugely; at one point the UK population alone donated 5 million pounds within just three days.

Two men who had also seen Michael Buerk's infamous BBC report were Bob Geldof (now Sir Bob Geldof) and Midge Ure, of the bands The Boomtown Rats and Ultravox respectively, and they swiftly decided they should use their backgrounds and fame to do something about it. Geldof and Ure penned a song entitled *Do They Know It's Christmas?* before recruiting a selection of popular artists under the moniker Band Aid to record an ensemble track. The tune became a massive Christmas hit, selling over a million copies in its first week alone and gathering vital funds for the cause. The success of Band Aid (and the subsequent Live Aid concerts in 1985) not only persuaded the Western governments to do more, it also compelled another man to attempt the same for his own particular industry: videogames. Aware of the popularity of compilations in the music industry, but not in software, Quicksilva's Rod Cousens hit upon an idea that would not only earn vital funds for the famine appeal but also transform the games industry in the mid-to-late Eighties.

"The famine demanded action," begins Rod, "and that was never better demonstrated than by the actions of the music industry and Band Aid." Impressed by the efforts of the Boomtown Rats frontman and his esteemed colleagues, Rod thought about how he could go about creating something that would compel videogame fans to contribute the way music fans were. "Computer and videogames were a rising industry, driven by the creativity of the young who wanted to bring about change," notes Rod, "and in doing so, improve everyone's lot. I felt the industry was close knit and could be rallied to the cause." Rod's plan was to create a compilation tape, stuffed with as many top games as possible, all donated by the famous software houses of the time. Other than Telstar's *Select* ▶



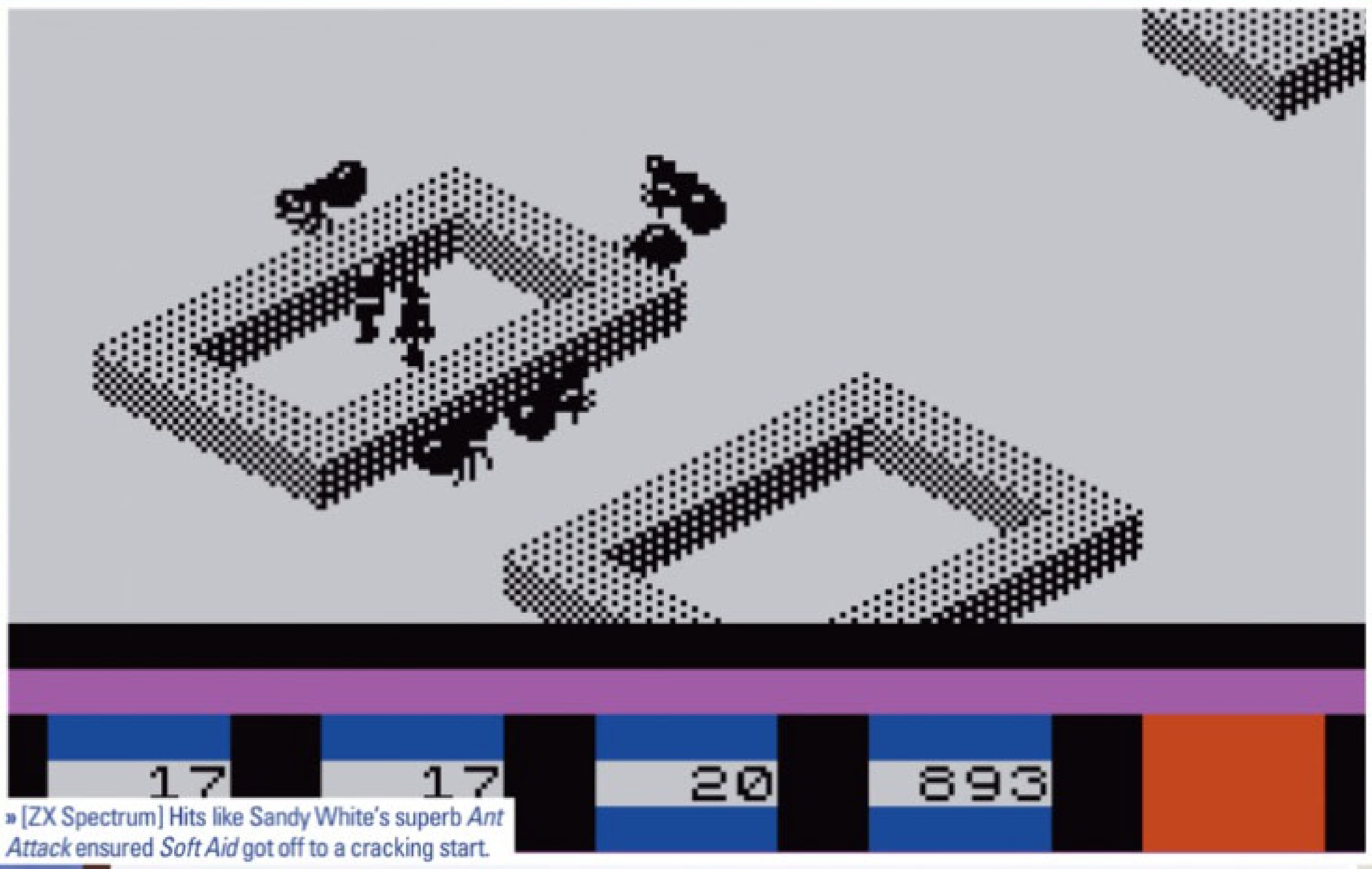
» A rare full scan of David Rowe's original artwork for *Soft Aid*'s advert and cover.

"When I asked for his endorsement he simply said 'you've got it'"

Rod Cousens on getting Sir Bob Geldof's approval for Soft Aid

IN THE KNOW

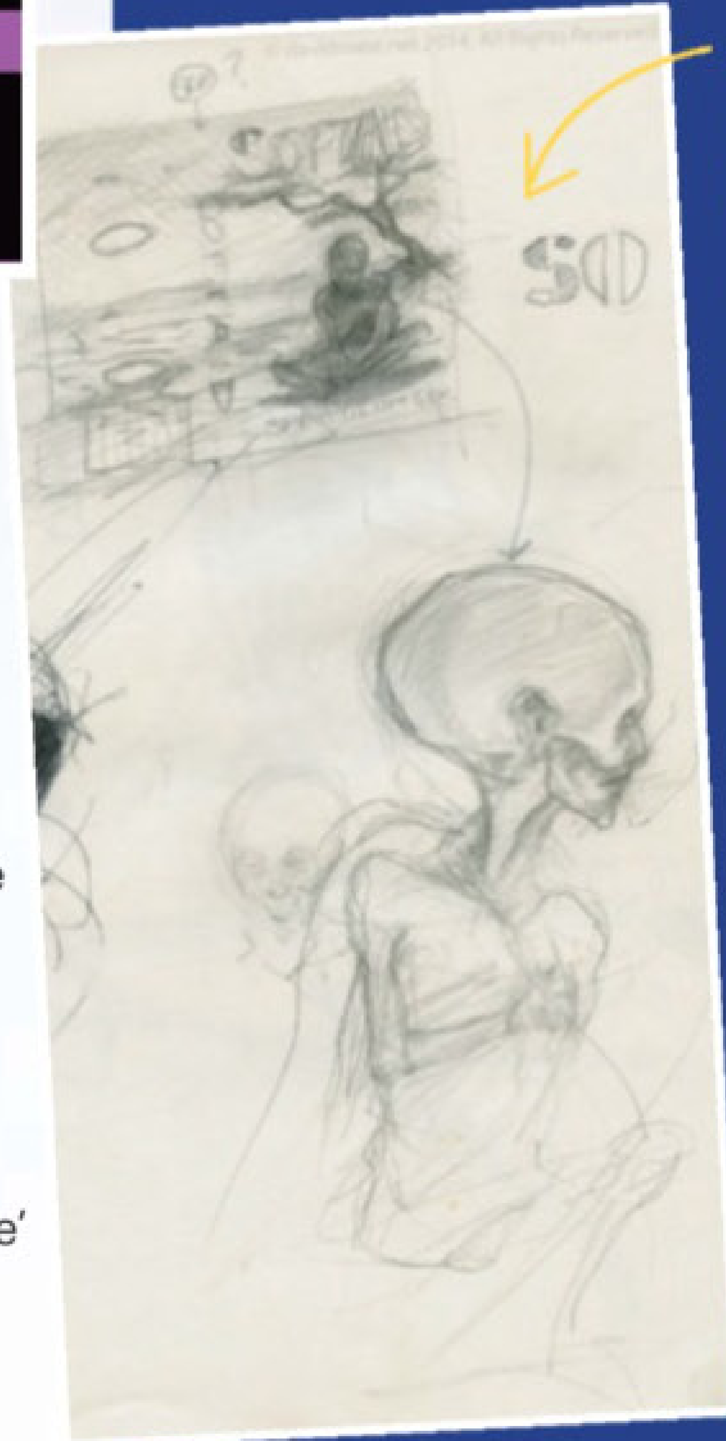
- » **PUBLISHER:** QUICKSILVA
- » **DEVELOPER:** VARIOUS
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **PLATFORM:** ZX SPECTRUM, COMMODORE 64
- » **GENRE:** COMPILATION



» [ZX Spectrum] Hits like Sandy White's superb *Ant Attack* ensured *Soft Aid* got off to a cracking start.

GENESIS OF A COVER

Soft Aid's cover artist, David Rowe, took us through his early sketches that led to the iconic final image



■ "The sketch of the starving figure was an exploration of the details that I had to consider, the weak and sunken features. The thumbnail sketch at the top was a simple plan for the layout of the cassette sleeve with room for the spine, reel retaining lugs, barcode and title."





■ "These were initial, very small explorations to get the 'feel' of the task in hand."

■ "This is a more developed version with a quick sketch of the Acacia tree on the cover. The sketches were always made very quickly and without being precious. It was a bit like scribbling fast and consciously steering the pen where I wanted it to go. They had to be spontaneous and were just as quickly dismissed if they weren't right."



3X © David Rowe

"We weren't looking to rip people off and it resonated and was bought in droves at the price"

Rod on Soft Aid's relatively low price of £4.99

▶ *1*, few compilations containing previously released games had seen the light of day, with single titles still considered enough to sell on their own. With his idea in place, Rod set about getting support for the compilation.

"The then editor of trade magazine, *CTW*, Greg Ingham, was also a driving force in his support and help in making it happen," says Rod, "and of course, the team at Quicksilva gave it their total commitment in addition to the other software houses. Consumer magazines provided advertising space free of charge and the retailers made no margin on sales. It was a widespread industry collaborative." A key facet was the artwork, which was created by an old school friend of Rod's named David Rowe. "I had produced many covers for videogames prior to *Soft Aid*," says David, "and also illustrations for books, magazines and television." Having kept in touch with his old friend, David was Rod's first choice when it came to this part of the compilation, and like most others he had been left saddened by the events in Ethiopia. "It was harrowing, night after night on the news. But I felt huge admiration for the no-nonsense approach that prodded the affluent West into action, me included."

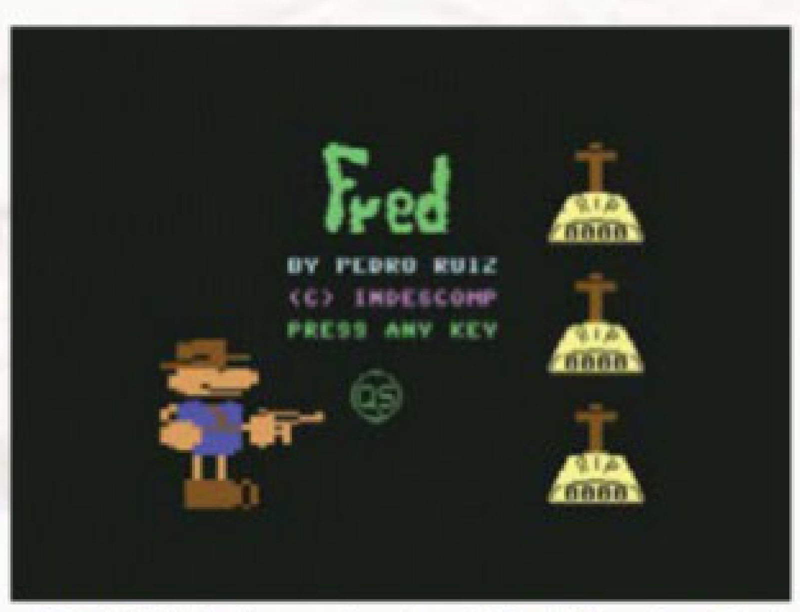
David had little guidance when it came to the cover. "I was left completely to my own devices; I produced sketches and roughs first, of course, but the direction was left to me," he explains. "I filled in a few sketchbook pages, but then homed in on this idea pretty much straight away." The artist drew on the pictures from TV and his own experience to create the stark, effective image. "I wanted to reflect the desolation and hopelessness that must have consumed the suffering as they watched their children die of hunger and thirst and able to do nothing for them," says David sadly. "A theme running through my work at the time was to have a surreal desert landscape with the focus being thrown on the subject. The figures were arrived at after much sketching and amending until I felt that I had what I needed." Despite the relevance of the image, David remembers one 'particularly large' retailer taking exception to what they viewed as an inappropriate cover for a computer game. "But as I recall Rod saw them off and they took it. My take on it was that the victims were their own best spokespeople and that any other image would have been tacky."

Meanwhile, Rod Cousens considered the official endorsement of the Band Aid movement to be essential. "My only approach was through Bob Geldof's record label who contacted him and put him in touch. In addition, I knew John Kennedy who was an entertainment lawyer and heavily involved in Band Aid." Rod's connections were paying off. Then one day he received that call back from the man himself. "Sir Bob and I had the briefest of conversations when he called Quicksilva and spoke to me. When I asked for his endorsement he simply said 'you've got it' and we took it from there." In addition to the official nod from Band Aid, it also quickly became obvious *Soft Aid* should include the famous song *Do They Know It's Christmas?* which had already become a smash hit at the end of 1984, although the charity itself was unable to lend further assistance. "They were too busy coping with the huge demands placed on them," says Rod. "Everyone had one thing on their minds and that was to get on with the task of pulling it together and raising the money as quickly as possible."



» [C64] *Falcon Patrol* was a fun, if limited, shoot-'em-up.

Rod began looking at the best-seller lists of the previous years and contacting software houses. For starters, his own company, Quicksilva, donated two of its most iconic games, Sandy White's *Ant Attack* for the ZX Spectrum and the impressive platformer *Fred* for the Commodore 64. Cross-platform games were Elite's self-proclaimed *Jet Set Willy*-beater *Kokotoni Wilf* and US Gold's precious metal collecting platformer *Gilligan's Gold*. On the Spectrum other hits included Fantasy's neat shooter *The Pyramid*, the technically impressive *Battlezone* clone *3D Tank Duel* from Realtime Games and the legendary, if slightly long-in-the-tooth *Horace Goes Skiing* from Melbourne House and Psion. The C64 version boasted more platform action in the form of Interceptor's *China Miner*, the aforementioned *Fred*, and *Gumshoe* (an *Elevator Action* clone) as well as the inevitable scrolling shooters in *Falcon Patrol* by Virgin (who had also contributed *Sorcery* to the Spectrum version) and Funsoft/US Gold's somewhat tricky vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up, *Flak*.



» [C64] Quicksilva's own donation to the C64 version, *Fred*.

In addition to these generous donations, Rod used all his industry contacts to ensure every aspect of the

compilation would be free of charge, or at least costs kept to a bare minimum. "We were relentless in maximising monies raised and calling in favours, using relationships, being creative and efficient – and there was a lot of goodwill," he says. "There was little reason to be disappointed – everyone was doing their best and I tend to look at it in that context." Eventually, when news of the compilation got out, some software houses even began proactively offering up top titles to Rod. "But we had constraints with cassettes and timeframes, although we went on to follow up this with more charity compilations such as *Off The Hook*, so they didn't go to waste." With more helpful support from other companies such as distributor Microdealer, the scene was set for *Soft Aid* to become a best-seller and earn much needed funds for the appeal.

Rod continues: "We never really knew what to expect [upon release], but if you had said it would be that successful at the outset I would never have believed it. It went beyond our wildest expectations, and given the fact that videogames was a fledgling industry in comparison to music, the achievement is even greater than could be imagined." Part of this success was no doubt down to the price. Despite initial mistaken reports of £2.99, *Soft Aid* retailed for a still-reasonable £4.99, which represented ridiculous value for money at 50 pence per game. "We wanted to give real value and get volume," explains Rod. "We were not looking to rip people off and it resonated and was bought in droves at the price." This and the emotive charity angle combined to lift *Soft Aid* to the top of several software charts and keep it there for up to four months, before remaining in most top-ten charts until 1986. The software houses undoubtedly took note; soon most were releasing their own collections as it became apparent compilations were a financially sound way to extend the life of any game.

By the time it was finally done, Rod estimates *Soft Aid* generated around £350,000 for the appeal and its success inspired the Quicksilva man to produce further charity compilations. On the 8-bit computers this included *Off The Hook* (for The Prince's Trust) and *Kidsplay* (NSPCC) and he has also since been involved with PlayStation and Steam charity compilations. But *Soft Aid* was where it all started. "I'd been at Quicksilva for two years and there was a real belief that times were changing," says Rod. "It was a period of real excitement and energy and games were making a difference to people's lives. [With *Soft Aid*] there was no consideration to anything but raising money for the Ethiopian famine appeal and I remain proud to this day of the amount we raised." *



» Its low price of £4.99 saw *Soft Aid* selling extremely well.


» [ZX Spectrum] *Starbike* was a fast shooter from The Edge.

OTHER CHARITY COMPILATIONS

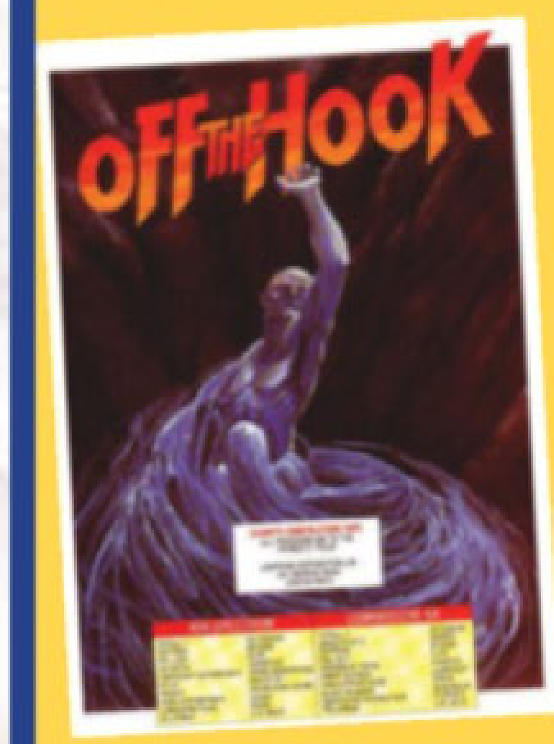
More collections that were released in the name of good causes

WOW GAMES



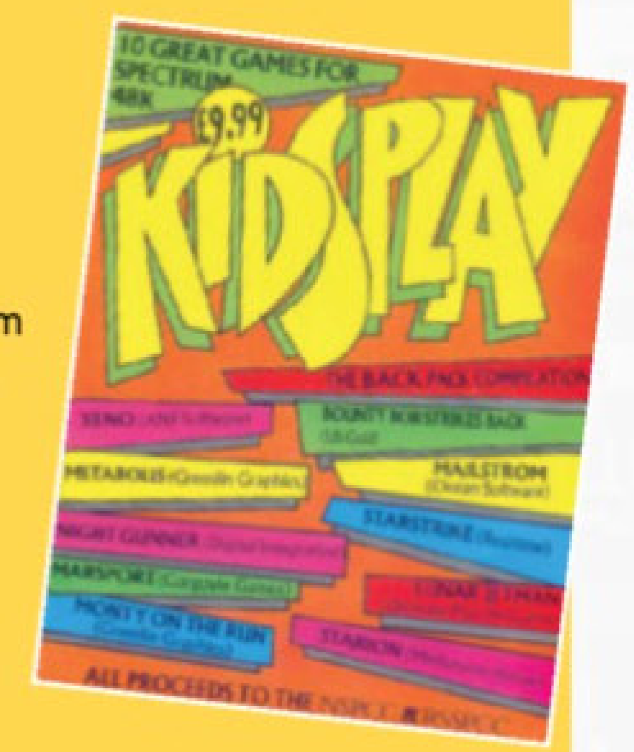
■ Released a year after *Soft Aid*, *WOW Games* suffered as the industry woke up to the potential of compilations, making the donations somewhat less than impressive. Most of its 14 games were a minimum of two years old and those that were more recent (such as *Rupert And The Ice Castle*) were less than impressive. Nevertheless, 14 games was 14 games, and another worthy cause.

OFF THE HOOK



■ After the phenomenal success of *Soft Aid*, Rod Cousens turned his attention closer to home and The Prince's Trust, with the specific aim of helping the rehabilitation of young drug users (hence the name). Released around the same time as *WOW Games*, *Off The Hook* again featured mainly older games but still decent efforts such as Beyond's *Psytron* and Llamasoft's *Sheep In Space*.

KIDSPLAY



■ Rod Cousens teamed up with Gremlin's Ian Stewart for this excellent compilation from 1987, this time in aid of the NSPCC. All three versions had a strong line-up with the Spectrum including older classics such as *Lunar Jetman*, *Night Gunner* and *Starstrike*, coupled with newer games such as *Monty On The Run* and the anagram-'em-up, *Starion*. The C64 tape's highlights included *Spindizzy*, *Skyfox* and US Gold's *Bounty Bob Strikes Back*.

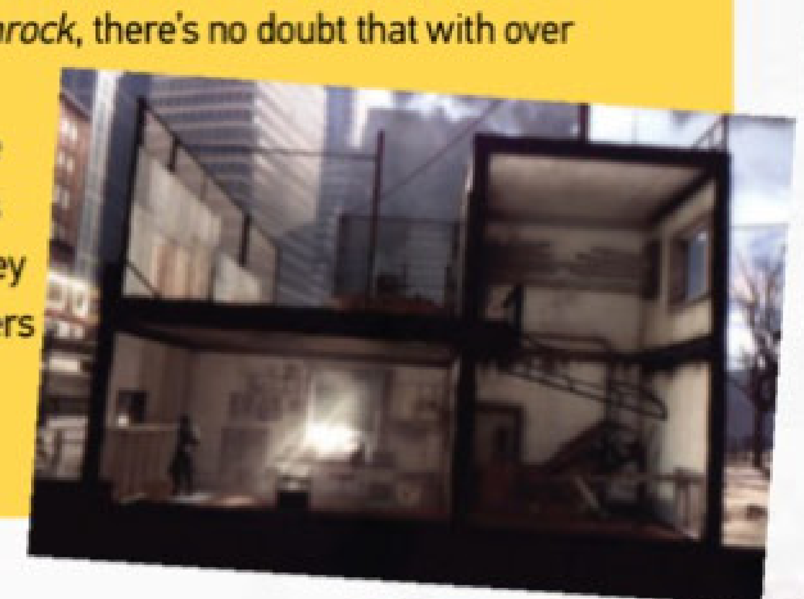
HELP



■ Released in 1996, this PlayStation compilation contained only three games, but the range of genres was impressive. *Road Rash* provided the thrills and spills, *Myst* the beauty, while *Broken Sword: Shadow Of The Templars* the puzzles and adventure. At a time when new games cost over £35, *Help* represented excellent value for money and was for a superb cause too.

HUMBLE BUNDLE

■ As we type the Humble Jumbo Bundle 2 has less than 24 hours left. Including a breadth of genres and fantastic games such as *Terraria*, *Deadlight*, *Age Of Empires Legacy* and *Legend Of Grimrock*, there's no doubt that with over 320,000 bundles sold already, this compilation represents absurd value for money. And as usual, purchasers are encouraged to donate their money as they see fit, between the developers and two charities, the American Red Cross and Child's Play.







The Games

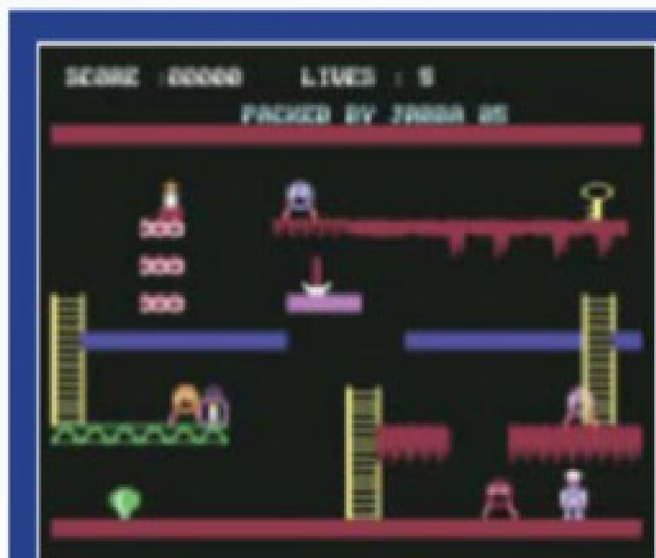
Graeme Mason revisits every game found on both the Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum compilations. How many have you played?

COMMODORE 64



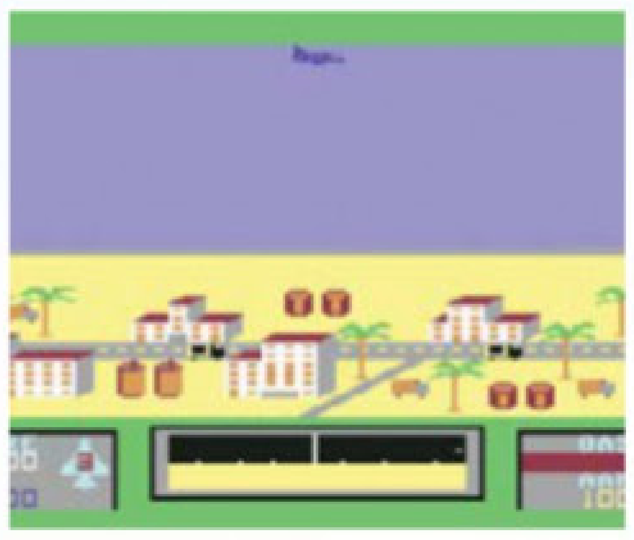
BEAMRIDER Activision

■ Fast, chaotic and fun, there's no doubting that *Beamrider* was a very fine Commodore 64 shoot-'em-up, despite being a little on the creaking side. A budget release in 1984 from Firebird suited *Beamrider* well, and the grid-based shooter got another deserved run-out thanks to *Soft Aid* a year later. Competent, if short-lived, blasting action.



CHINA MINER Interceptor

■ While many may have fond memories, time has not been kind on Interceptor's *China Miner*, although the game still contains some really lovely music. Absolutely rock hard – brutal in places – *China Miner* was a devilish platformer programmed by Interceptor regular and genuine 'where are they now?' candidate Ian Gray.



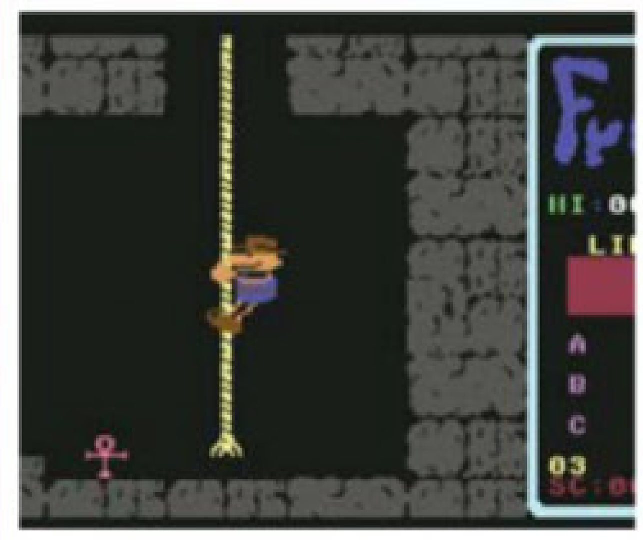
FALCON PATROL Virgin

■ Essentially just a *Defender* clone but with jet fighters instead of traditional spaceships, Virgin's *Falcon Patrol* had fairly limited appeal, but what it did try to do, it did very well. Smart, responsive keys, fast-paced shooting action and some really excellent sound effects added up to an exciting game, although it was a little short on long-term appeal.



FLAK US Gold

■ The Commodore 64 was still to produce many of its classic scrolling shooters back in 1984, but *Flak* was an early prime example of what the home computer could do. Good responsive controls made this US Gold game a fairly decent-sized hit (despite its rather steep difficulty curve) and another nice little addition to the compilation.



FRED Quicksilva

■ Another Quicksilva donation, this time it was the turn of the Commodore 64 version of Indiana Jones, exploring underground and searching for lost treasures. Boasting a huge maze (you needed to make a map to realistically find your way around), Fred's task was to wander around, collecting treasure, eliminating rivals and avoiding those pesky drops of water.



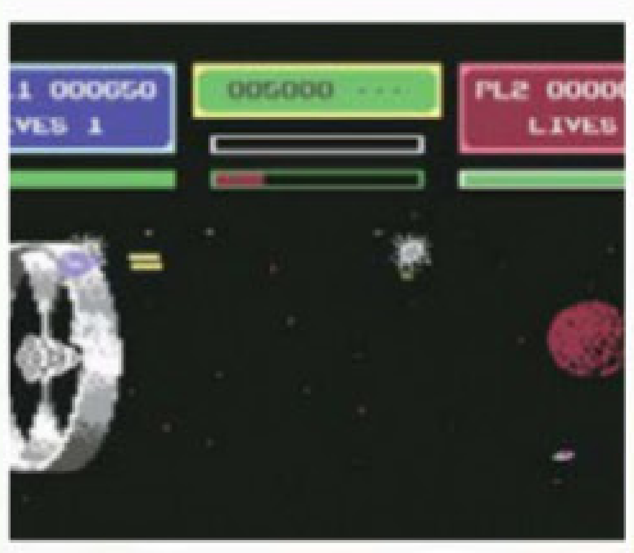
GILLIGAN'S GOLD Ocean

■ This collect-'em-up *Bagman* clone originated on the Commodore machine, something reflected in the Spectrum version's graphics. Like the Speccy version, it was criticised for its difficulty, but the gratifying joy at dropping a money bag on a villain's head and its smart presentation won over many reviewers despite a few annoying gameplay tics.



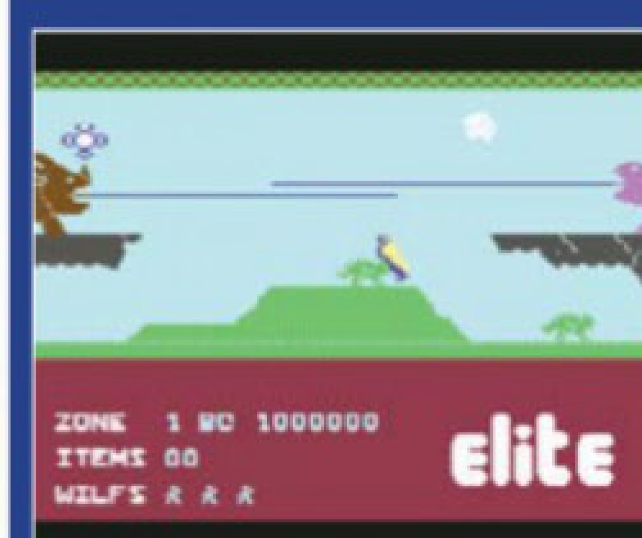
GUMSHOE A 'N' F

■ A 'n' F's neat little *Elevator Action* clone was another solid inclusion on *Soft Aid* and an example of a game that, while not representing particular great value on its own, fitted perfectly into the compilation. Your task was to take on an army of assorted hoods as a brave detective attempting to rescue the gangster's moll in the time-honoured fashion.



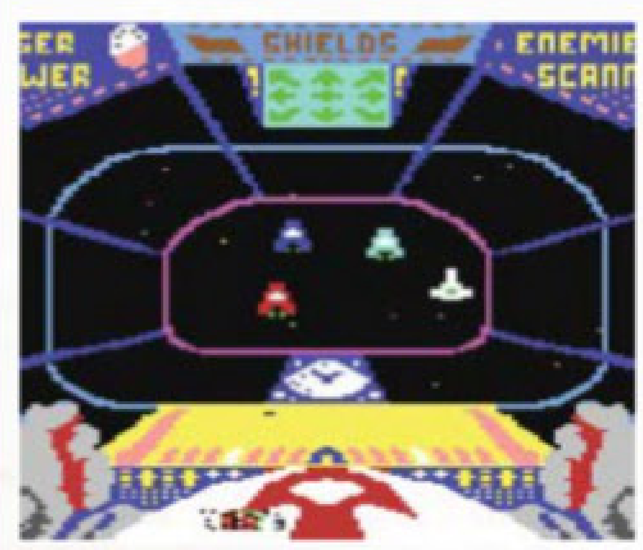
GYROPOD Taskset

■ Despite its novel take on the space shoot-'em-up (the player took control of an alien craft intent on destroying multiple planets), *Gyropod* was an attractive but repetitive shooter for the Commodore 64. Not a great game, but once again a perfectly adequate filler title for *Soft Aid*.



KOKOTONI WILF Elite

■ '*Jet Set Willy* with wings' was how *Zzap!64* described this Elite game when it reviewed the budget version back in the summer of 1989. With similarly neat graphics as the Spectrum version and a really well-judged difficulty curve, *Kokotoni Wilf*, like on the Sinclair compilation, was one of the better games offered by *Soft Aid*.



STAR TRADER Bug Byte

■ This little-known space trading/shooting effort was clearly influenced by David Braben's masterpiece *Elite* – but if you're going to 'draw inspiration', what better way to start? As with the legendary Firebird game, the aim in *Star Trader* was to jet around the galaxy, shooting enemies and trading with people, both accompanied by a very strange soundtrack.



ZX SPECTRUM



3D TANK DUEL Realtime Games

■ Developer and Publisher Realtime Games made its name with this classy *Battlezone* clone that defied the limitations of the Spectrum. Fast-paced and impressively faithful to the arcade game, only its fiddly controls let it down. Follow-up *Starstrike* was even better and featured on another of Rod's charity efforts, *Kidsplay*.



ANT ATTACK Quicksilva

■ What can we say about Sandy White's legendary game that hasn't been said before? The ahead-of-its-time graphics engine coupled with a tense and frantic atmosphere has made *Ant Attack* a bona fide Spectrum classic and an excellent donation from Quicksilva itself. It may have been two years old in 1985, but there was no doubting the game's pedigree.



GILLIGAN'S GOLD Ocean

■ Another arcade clone (this time *Bagman*), the objective in *Gilligan's Gold* was to guide the character through several mines, avoiding guards and using elevators and carts to help collect money bags. While not Ocean's best effort, it was a nicely playable platform game, although a port from the original Commodore 64 version.



HORACE GOES SKIING Melbourne House/Psion

■ Like *Ant Attack*, Horace's outing on the piste was starting to look a little creaky in 1985 but there was no doubting it could still entertain. Consisting of two parts, Horace first had to negotiate a phenomenally busy road to get to the local ski shop before purchasing his equipment and taking to the slopes.



JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Thor

■ While it has a few fans, time has not been particularly kind to this early Thor effort. Using a system of invisible death traps, *Jack And The Beanstalk* fast became an exercise in painstaking trial and error that completely negated the original concept and attractive graphics. Not really a lot of fun if we're honest.



KOKOTONI WILF Elite

■ Touted as a legitimate challenger to *Jet Set Willy*'s platforming crown, *Kokotoni Wilf* suffered a little in comparison with Matthew Smith's classic, and yet it remains an excellent game in its own right. Taking in several different time zones, it was a challenging, colourful and entertaining game that many people still recall with fondness.



THE PYRAMID Fantasy

■ Fantasy was one of a clutch of short-lived software houses from the early Eighties and this was its most popular release along with *Backpackers Guide To The Universe*. Each screen saw its bubble-enclosed hero, Ziggy, descend further down the titular pyramid, despatching assorted enemies and collecting crystals. Simple, blasting fun.



SORCERY Virgin

■ While *Sorcery+* on the Amstrad was a noticeably superior game, this original version from Virgin was still neat enough to earn good reviews when released in 1984. Praised in particular for its (then novel) combination of action and adventure elements, *Sorcery* was a fast-paced game that required both thought *and* good reflexes.



SPELLBOUND Beyond

■ Before Beyond Software made its name with complex icon-driven action titles such as *The Lords Of Midnight* and *Shadowfire* it released this *Q*bert* clone that was unfortunately one of its poorer efforts. Slow movement, rampant colour clash and some amateurish coding meant it was one of the lesser games on Spectrum *Soft Aid*.



STARBIKE The Edge

■ Owing far more than just a passing debt to Ultimate Play The Game's *Lunar Jetman*, *Starbike* was one of two games from Paul Curtis. Yet another arcade game, its graphics were impressively large and moved at a fair lick, making it rather curious as to why the so obviously talented Mr Curtis created no more ZX Spectrum games...

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come



INFO



- **Featured System:** PC
- **Year:** 2001
- **Publisher:** Rockstar Games
- **Developer:** Bungie West
- **Key People:** Steve Abeyta, Art Lead/ Character Animator; Chris Butcher, Programmer (AI, particle system, various); Hamilton Chu, Producer

GO DEEPER

- **Multiplayer mode was originally planned for *Oni*, however this was dropped owing to latency issues.**
- **Voice actor Pete Stacker, aka *Halo: Combat Evolved*'s Captain Keyes, also plays Griffin in *Oni*.**





» [PC] Konoko proudly sporting her TCTF uniform, flanked by her fellow officers of the law.

45. ONI

Bungie's road to Destiny took an anime-style detour in 2000, grabbing the attention of an awestruck E3 a year before Halo began its path to domination… Paul Davies explains why you need to experience it

THE BACKGROUND

Though it was *Halo* that made Bungie famous among console gamers worldwide, the team had been trailblazing on Mac and PC since the early Nineties with terrific games that included *Pathways Into Darkness*, *Marathon* and *Myth*.

Bungie surprised many of its fans during E3 2000 by showing the studio's latest creation exclusively on banks of PlayStation 2 consoles. Not only that, but *Oni* was an action-shooter aimed at a much younger audience than previously. Stylistically it resided several store-shelves below the gore soaked fields of medieval *Myth* and the *Doom*-inspired splatter of first-person shooter *Marathon*.

Oni was the first, and last, game to come from Bungie West, before Bungie was acquired by Microsoft in June 2000. Bungie West created the PC and Mac versions, while the PS2 port was handled by Rockstar Toronto.

What's interesting for fans of Bungie's output since *Oni* is that many of the Bungie West team joined their Redmond buddies to work on the *Halo* series and beyond. Despite first appearances, this kung-fu-kicking adventure has more in common with the Master Chiefs, ODSTs and Guardians than you'd think. If you're Bungie bananas, here's why you need to own *Oni*…

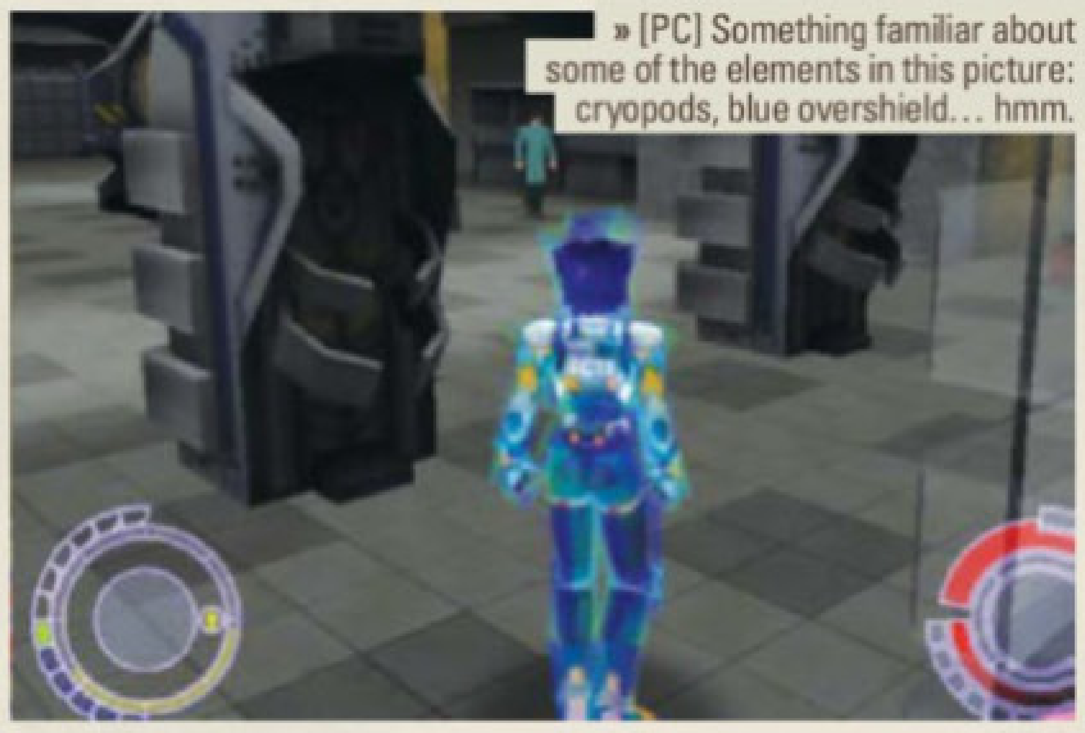
THE GAME

Confession time: our only interest in *Oni* is because it's a Bungie game. That being said, we're glad such a blinkered view turned our heads toward something very special. Here is a complex combat-oriented game that incorporates gunplay and sandbox strategy. Though *Oni* predates super-powered hero quest *inFamous* from Sony and Activision's *Prototype* by almost a decade, the core mechanics are arguably deeper and consequently more expressive but, most importantly, fun.

Our protagonist, code-named Konoko, is a super soldier for the Technological Crimes Task Force (TCTF) who we soon discover has enhanced abilities owing to a secret experiment. There's a twist to the tale, as Konoko – real name Mai Hasegawa – turns rogue, investigating her past and her role in the future.

While *Oni* looks fairly bland alongside contemporaries *Metal Gear Solid 2* and *Grand Theft Auto III* this is mostly a design decision as everything else is slick as





» [PC] Something familiar about some of the elements in this picture: cryopods, blue overshield… hmm.



» [PC] Bungie's game was surprisingly bloody in places. Shoot first ask questions later.

can be. A short tutorial provides insight into Konoko's manoeuvrability and combat smarts, but it's not until you start landing punches and kicks in the game proper that the range of approaches starts to impress.

Opponents are disarmed, thrown and stomped into the ground with stunning prowess. Gunplay isn't quite as accomplished, but the range of weapons and tools are entertaining, including plasma rifles, energy shields and invisibility cloaking to suit your play style. *Oni* is not a button-mashing frenzy – indeed you can only succeed throughout the bulk of the game by thinking ahead.

The most Bungie-like trait is the sandbox approach to level design, in which enemies start out roughly in the same locations but Konoko's actions prompt them into finding alternative ways to overwhelm her. The AI isn't amazing as enemies are a poor shot, tend to get bunched up and are prone to be thrown point-blank. However, enemy types combined with basic attack patterns give players plenty to think about.

Also Bungie-esque is the presence of friendly NPCs in some levels, similar to how the marines give support to Master Chief in *Halo*. They acknowledge Konoko and provide assistance by handing over useful health boosts or ammo clips, sometimes responding in humorous ways such as when Konoko over-stimulates her health with hyposprays, activating enhanced combat powers.

Though the anime approach is said to be influenced by *Ghost In The Shell*, there's a much goofier side to Konoko and her support team than Major Kusanagi and Public Security Section 9. Hit the Action button out of context and Konoko randomly taunts her enemies with "You're going to be beaten by a girl, HAHAHAH!" etc. Quips from Konoko's Cortana-like 'Simulated Life Doll' Shinatama are initially hilarious and cute.

Oni falls short of true greatness owing to its lock-and-key progression combined with samey combat routines throughout mostly industrial facilities. It was criticised for not having its promised multiplayer mode, and the concept of an online beat-'em-up with weapons and arena agility could've been awesome. In all other respects, though, Bungie hallmarks are unmistakable.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

From recognising the voice of Jacob Keyes to hearing familiar sound effects – and some claim, animations – from the world of *Halo*, *Oni* is a geek-out opportunity at the very least for Bungie aficionados.

Overall it's the typically understated though satisfying visual effects, sound design and narrative approach that proves so satisfying from Bungie old-timers. Programmer Chris Butcher (now technical director on *Destiny*), designer Hardy LeBel (lead on *Halo: CE*) and writer Hamilton 'Hambone' Chu (lead producer of *Halo: CE*) all leave their metaphorical calling cards throughout *Oni*. You also get a terrific musical score from no less than Martin O'Donnel, Michael Salvatori and Paul Sebastien, which for some could be worth the price of admission alone. On a serious note though, *Oni* truly is an important part of Bungie history that cannot be ignored. ✱

Things of note

HERE TAKE THIS



NPCs are more than window dressing in *Oni*, providing helpful recon information and sometimes field support in terms of extra ammo and health supplies.

SLEEK SEXY UI



Often overlooked as a core component, the user interface in *Oni* is well thought out and unobtrusive while stylistically in line with the anime visuals.

INFURIATING AI



Larger enemies are easier to outthink and manoeuvre, but give the lower ranks a chance to get organised and Konoko has her work cut out, often resulting in restarts.

HALF DECENT VO



The plot is wacky but made compelling by Bungie's voice-over talent. Amanda Winn Lee (Konoko) and Pete Stacker (Griffin) try to make you believe.

KONOKO ACROBATIC MO



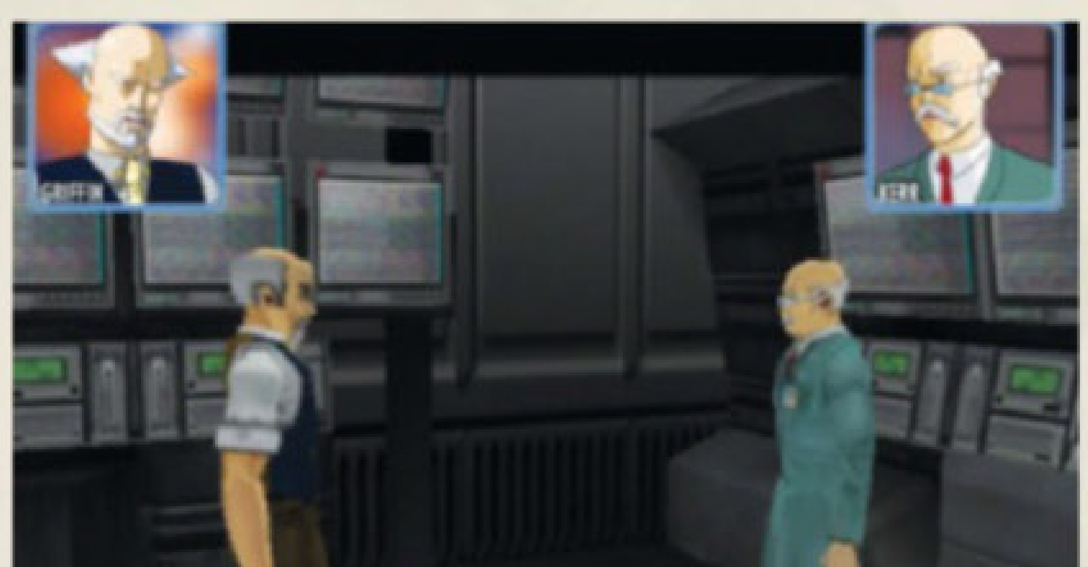
Konoko shows no sign whatsoever of vulnerability. We'll go out on a limb to say she probably inspired Faith Connors (*Mirror's Edge*).



» [PC] Barabas is a slow-moving tank of a mid-level boss who's easily outmanoeuvred by Konoko.



» [PC] This is about as complicated as the puzzles get in *Oni*, and the greyest.



» [PC] The cutscenes in *Oni* are truly *Halo: Combat Evolved*-tastic, voice-acting and all.

ORIGIN

It grew from a family-run start-up with a sole programmer to one of the most respected leading-edge PC gaming publishers in North America. From Ultima to Wing Commander and beyond, Mike Bevan looks back at the history of Origin Systems



» [Apple II] Origin launched with Richard's RPG *Ultima III: Exodus*.

» [PC] *Wing Commander* featured stunning space combat sequences and some great ship design.



It's 1974. A young freshman high school student is reading *The Lord Of The Rings* for the first time, and has also stumbled upon a newly published tabletop role-playing game called *Dungeons* *& Dragons*. The freshman is Richard Garriott, later to be known by his alter ego Lord British in the popular role-playing computer game franchise *Ultima*. With Tolkien and Gary Gygax as his inspiration, Richard was moved to create his own primitive fantasy worlds, sowing the seeds for his award-winning 'trilogy of trilogies' in the fantasy world of Britannia. "I had access to a teletype machine," he recalls, "and it was natural to me to start creating these teletype products in BASIC that still looked a lot like the tile graphics that you would see in later *Ultima*s, but all done with ASCII characters on what was effectively a very slow mechanical typewriter." The program, christened D&D #1, was the first in a long line of projects leading to Richard's first commercial game, *D&D #28b*, more popularly known as *Akalabeth*, a name taken from a chapter in *The Silmarillion*.

"When personal computers came out I started writing on the Apple II," he continues. "My first games were published through two different companies: California Pacific and Sierra On-Line. *Akalabeth* and the first *Ultima* were sold by California Pacific and *Ultima II* was published by Sierra. But although the games sold very well through those companies, I did not get paid very well because both of them were poorly managed. And that's when my brother, who I had called upon to help try and collect the revenues from those first two companies, turned to me and said 'Richard, why don't you and I start Origin, because I would at least know that when the company earns a dollar from one of your games, the person they darn well better pay is the person that makes the game…'"

Origin was founded in 1983 in Houston, Texas, with Richard and Robert Garriott partnering with their father Owen, and Richard's university room-mate Chuck 'Chuckles' Bueche. "We literally started in my parent's garage," Richard reminisces. "It was a three-car garage with an art studio on top of it. The studio became our company headquarters, while the garage downstairs became our manufacturing and shipping department. During the day we'd sit upstairs and write code or do the daily business functions, and in the evenings the whole family and our friends would come out and literally spend the whole evening hand-copying discs on an Apple II, folding and shrink-wrapping boxes, and shipping them out by UPS."

Origin's first product, *Ultima III: Exodus*, was an indication of the ambitious game-design philosophy of the company. As he would with every game in the series, Richard abandoned the code from *Ultima II* and re-wrote the game from scratch, adding a *D&D-*

SYSTEMS

style party system, a proper soundtrack, and fully-animated characters, a first for computer RPGs. "We had a simple statement which was let's just run a good business in addition to making good games," he tells us. "Origin was specifically founded as an author-friendly company, which is one of the reasons it grew so fast. We were very pro-creator and our contracts supported that. That was how we drew in so many top talents, while lots of other companies were literally ripping people off."

"I'm a completely self-taught developer and it really was the desire to learn from each new game," says Richard of his decision to discard every previous instalment's code in the *Ultima* franchise. "When I wrote my first game, it wasn't really written very well from a code structure standpoint, so when I started the next one I started from scratch, mostly because I'd learned so much writing the first one. So if you go back through the series *Akalabeth* was really a teletype game. *Ultima I* was my first personal computer game written in BASIC, but then I realised you could have more control if you wrote in assembly language, which I used for *Ultima II*. But since it was the first assembly language program I had written, of course I could do a better job if I started from scratch for *Ultima III*. For *Ultima IV* the coding was no longer the challenge, and that was the first time I really sat down free of the need to learn how to program and began instead to focus on what it took to make a great game."



» [PC] Visiting Lord British in *Ultima IV: Quest For The Avatar.*



» [Apple II] Shoot-'em-up *Caverns Of Callisto* was one of Origin's first published games.



» [PC] *Ultima Underworld* used a real-time 3D engine similar to the one in iD Software's *Doom.*

> **"We had a simple statement which was let's just run a good business in addition to making good games…"**
> RICHARD GARRIOTT ON ORIGIN'S FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

The company motto 'We Create Worlds', emblazoned on the title screens and packaging of many of its later products, also summed up what Origin was trying to achieve. "Robert ran the business, and was rarely allowed to contribute creatively, mostly because he wasn't that good at contributing creatively to the products," says Richard. "But that by-line actually came from him, and we often describe it as his one moment of creative brilliance. Not only was it a powerful statement but we agreed because we believed in it and lived it…"

Former Origin designer David Shapiro (aka Dr Cat) remembers his first visit to the company premises well. "Origin ran an ad in *The Space Gamer* magazine to announce that they existed and would be publishing *Ultima* and other games," he says. "It also said they were looking for programmers, game designers, artists and writers. Though they actually didn't have any jobs open yet. I found out later I was the only one to respond! Robert Garriott arranged to pick me ▶

IN THE KNOW

- Origin founder Richard Garriott's alias Lord British stems from his birthplace, Cambridge in the Sceptred Isle…
- The original Origin offices were based above a three-car garage in the Garriott family home in Houston, Texas.
- The *Ultima* series ran to nine instalments in the main franchise along with several spin-offs, including the *Ultima Underworld* and *Runes Of Virtue* titles.
- Origin's company motto was 'We Create Worlds', which neatly expressed its desire to create immersive gameplay experiences.
- The company became part of the Electronic Arts empire in 1992, following a $35 million acquisition deal.
- Origin's most famous property after *Ultima* was the space-combat franchise *Wing Commander*, which ran to over a dozen sequels and spin-offs, and spawned the *Privateer* starship-trading series.
- At $10 million, the budget for *Wing Commander III: Heart Of The Tiger* was only a million dollars short of what George Lucas spent to produce the first *Star Wars* film. Its sequel was $1 million more expensive…
- Richard's post-Origin venture, Destination Games, was a sly play-on-words on the company he founded two decades earlier.



» (Left) Richard getting all medieval in a publicity shot circa *Ultima III*.



» A line-up of all the PC instalments in the *Wing Commander* franchise.

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TIMELINE

1983 ORIGIN SYSTEMS IS FORMED WITH THE HELP OF A $70,000 INVESTMENT FROM THE GARRIOTT FAMILY. ITS FIRST TWO GAMES, ULTIMA III AND CAVERNS OF CALLISTO, ARE PUBLISHED.

1984 ORIGIN SIGNS A DISTRIBUTION DEAL WITH ELECTRONIC ARTS.

1985 ULTIMA IV: QUEST OF THE AVATAR IS PUBLISHED FOR THE APPLE II.

1986 ORIGIN RE-ACQUIRES THE RIGHTS TO THE ORIGINAL TWO ULTIMA GAMES ALLOWING IT TO PUBLISH THEM ITSELF. THE COMPANY RELOCATES TO AUSTIN.

1988 ULTIMA V: WARRIORS OF DESTINY IS RELEASED.

1990 THE FIRST WING COMMANDER TITLE HITS THE SHELVES, ALONG WITH ULTIMA VI: THE FALSE PROPHET.

1992 THE STUDIO IS ACQUIRED BY ELECTRONIC ARTS. ULTIMA VII: THE BLACK GATE AND ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS ARE PUBLISHED.

1994 PAGAN: ULTIMA VIII, SYSTEM SHOCK AND WING COMMANDER III: HEART OF THE TIGER ARE RELEASED ON PC. THE LATTER HAS THE BIGGEST BUDGET EVER SPENT ON A VIDEOGAME.

1995 BIOFORGE AND CRUSADER: NO REMORSE ARE PUBLISHED.

1996 ORIGIN RELEASES TWO MORE BIG-BUDGET SPACE-OPERAS, PRIVATEER 2 AND WING COMMANDER IV: THE PRICE OF FREEDOM. CHRIS ROBERTS LEAVES THE COMPANY.

1997 ORIGIN RELEASES ULTIMA ONLINE, ONE OF THE FIRST EVER MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAMES, AND THE FINAL COMMERCIAL WING COMMANDER TITLE, PROPHECY.

1999 THE LAST IN THE ULTIMA SERIES IX: ASCENSION, DELAYED DUE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ULTIMA ONLINE, MAKES IT INTO STORES.

2000 EA CANCELS OTHER MULTIPLAYER PROJECTS INCLUDING THE PLANNED PRIVATEER 3: ONLINE. RICHARD GARRIOTT LEAVES THE STUDIO.

2004 ULTIMA X: ODYSSEY IS CANCELLED AND ORIGIN IS CLOSED DOWN BY ELECTRONIC ARTS.

up at the airport and drive me to their house – they were still living with their parents, Owen (the astronaut) and Helen (the artist). Richard was just finishing up *Ultima III*, working in a nicely set up room over the garage. He had six or eight Axlon Ramdisks hooked up to his Apple so everything ran extra fast. When *Ultima III* was done, I went with Richard and Robert to a computer store in Houston where they'd promised to premiere the game. A bunch of fans were there to get the first copies and get them autographed. Also a couple of obvious pirates who probably wanted to be the first ones to crack the extensive copy protection…"

With Richard hard at work cranking out new instalments of *Ultima*, Origin began employing other programmers for a variety of alternative projects. Chuck Beuche's first game for Origin, *Caverns Of Callisto*, was a fast-paced scrolling shoot-'em-up for the Apple II with overtones of *Scramble* and *Jetpac*. A deal with board game publisher Steve Jackson Games saw him moving to *Autoduel* (based on Steve Jackson's *Car Wars*) and the hex-based tank combat game *Ogre*. David Shapiro was taken on to develop the Commodore 64 version of the side-scrolling RPG *Moebius* from scratch in two-and-a-half months for its Christmas release in 1985. "They were so pleased with my work they offered me a full-time job," he says. "What I liked about Origin was the high level of talent, intelligence, experience, creativity and enthusiasm of the team. I feel that during the period I was there, from 1986 to 1991, Origin was one of the absolute best game developers in the world. Making the best games and advancing the state of the art in technology and game design, that was the main thing."

> **"I didn't know what the company was until I showed up to work and that's when I realised 'Holy crap it's Origin!"**
> STARR LONG GETS A SURPRISE ON HIS FIRST DAY AT THE NEW JOB

1989 saw the release of an ambitious game by Paul Neurath that foreshadowed its most famous franchise next to *Ultima*. *Space Rogue* was an interstellar trading and combat simulation, with RPG elements and a more developed storyline than its nearest competitor, *Elite*. It also trumped the famous British space-sim by incorporating full-colour, fast solid 3D polygon graphics as opposed to *Elite*'s wire-frame models. *Space Rogue* received rave reviews, including a 97% Overall score and Gold Medal award in the UK-based Commodore 64 review magazine *Zzap!64*. Its success paved the way for another space-combat game, produced with the design talents of an American-born exile from Manchester, currently residing close to Origin's brand new headquarters.

"When Chris Roberts first came to us, we'd moved out of my parents' garage in Houston and moved to Austin," says Richard. "We had a freelance artist named Dennis Loubet, who did the covers of nearly every one of our products. At the time we transplanted from Houston to our Austin office we decided to hire Dennis in-house. Dennis was doing some freelance work for Chris to make a small game that he was planning to publish in Europe. So we'd hired his only artist, and when Chris asked where he'd gone Dennis told him he'd joined us at Origin, which caused Chris to come walking in our door to ask if he could work with us too. So we acquired Dennis on purpose and Chris by accident."



» [PC] *Wing Commander III*'s Kilrathi looked like Chewbacca having a bad-hair day.



» Skywalker versus pussycat on the cover of *Wing Commander III*…



» Mark Hamill framed by a redhead pilot and an 'adult actress' on the set of *Wing Commander III*…



DEFINING GAMES



Ultima VII: The Black Gate
(DOS)

When launched *Ultima VII* came in a totally black package that slightly echoed the movie *Spinal Tap*, but the game itself was lauded by fans as being a radical improvement for the series. Ditching the tiled appearance and awkward interface of previous *Ultima* games, it was the most detailed and complex incarnation of Britannia yet seen. The plot sees the player's character, the Avatar, popping back 200 years after the events of the previous game to stop an evil entity called the Guardian invading Lord British's realm. It's also a far darker and more mature storyline than its prequels, brimming with moral choices.



Wing Commander III
(Various)

While we have a soft spot for the original two games, we'd be hard pressed to point to a bigger technological leap between videogame sequels as the jump from *Wing Commander II* to this third outing of Origin's space-opera. *Heart Of The Tiger* heralded the move from floppy disc to multiple CD-ROMs, bitmapped sprites to proper polygon 3D ship models, and from hand-drawn cutscenes to multi-million dollar sci-fi movie video sequences. Starring *Star Wars* icon Mark Hamill as the player's alter-ego Christopher Blair, it started a gripping story arc that would be tied up in *Wing Commander IV: The Price Of Freedom*.



Crusader: No Remorse
(PC, Saturn, PlayStation)

Telling the tale of a gun-packing rebel in a Boba Fett helmet, *Crusader* is an isometric shooter packing enough firepower to put NATO to shame. Like Bullfrog's *Syndicate*, it's one of those games where you can just have a good laugh running about, setting people on fire and blowing everything up. The game was built around the *Ultima VIII* engine and features a surprisingly high level of detail for its day, with nearly everything being destructible. Each mission is framed by movie cutscenes, although lacking the budget of the *Wing Commander* games, the acting is bit on the ropey side. Still, that just adds to the charm.



Privateer 2: The Darkening (PC)

The original *Privateer* introduced a mix of trading, combat missions and RPG-style galactic exploration, a departure from the more rigid story-led structure of *Wing Commander*. This ambitious sequel added a movie-like storyline with one of the best casts ever assembled for a videogame, from Clive Owen to Christopher Walken. While the ship-to-ship combat can get a little repetitive, the freedom in the game is light years from the *Wing Commander* titles; you can choose whether to follow the narrative of the story or simply ignore it and zoom around the galaxy like an armchair Han Solo doing your own thing.

"In the UK Chris had been doing games for the ZX-80 and they certainly weren't strong enough to change the world because it was such a primitive machine. His first Apple II game, *Times Of Lore*, was a medieval fantasy game that was good but not earth-shattering. Then came the day that Chris came to our business meeting with the idea for the game he was going to do next. It was going to be called *Wing Commander*. He'd taken some time on his own to build a little prototype of not only the 3D space flight section of the game but a cinematic method for you to get into your ship and launch into that 3D environment. So he showed his prototype with a guy running down the hall cutting to the side of a spaceship with the canopy opening up, then the guy jumping into his seat, putting on his helmet, then shooting down a tube into space. That was the first any of us had seen of his idea, and it was the first any of us needed… it was so obvious that it was going to be a huge success."



» Clive Owen on the set of *Privateer 2* in 1996.

Published in 1990, *Wing Commander* was a revolutionary PC title for its time, and the response to the game, as in that Origin boardroom meeting, was one of astonishment. It featured a spectacular 3D game engine that supported full-colour, exquisitely detailed spacecraft combat sequences, framed by cinematic cutscenes and mission briefings. Inspired by *Star Wars* and *Battlestar Galactica*, Chris's creation played like an epic sci-fi version of World War II in space, with the Terran Confederation battling for survival against a cat-like alien race, the Kilrathi.

While the original game and its improved sequel stuck firmly to traditional computer graphics, for the third instalment of the game, *Wing Commander III: Heart Of The Tiger*, Chris was given a suitably astronomical budget of $10 million in order to embrace the upcoming PC CD-ROM technology and include movie-like full-motion video sequences. This included the prospect of playing a character in the guise of Luke Skywalker himself…

"Of course it was always scary looking down the front of that barrel," admits Richard when asked about what was at that point the biggest budget ever thrown at a videogame. "But Chris always returned whatever he'd spent in some good multiple… *Ultima*s were expensive too, compared to other games on the market. However the *Wing Commander* games soon became five or ten times more expensive than any *Ultima*. But most people believed pretty passionately in what Chris was doing, so in the end we all made a good decision to back him."

"It was a whole company activity to go to California, shoot some footage, and bring it back and blue-screen it into the game. We had some great casts on the *Wing Commander* games – Mark Hamill, John Rhys-Davies, Malcolm McDowell… Because it was early days for the technology people were very excited to play in this new-fangled realm. One of my biggest memories of those early *Wing Commander*s was how much data it took to manage the projects. At Origin we had one of the first ever terabyte hard drives. Of course today our laptop PCs have similar storage capabilities, ▶

"EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE A MARTIN…"

For a while, Origin's music department consisted solely of renowned composer Martin Galway. "When the Super Nintendo first came out Martin wanted to hook it up to his audio equipment to find out how clean the audio signal was (his verdict: very clean)," remembers David Shapiro. "Then he hooked his $2,000 synthesizer up to the speakers and turned the SNES sound off, and I played *Super Mario World* while I had one of the top musicians in the industry improvising a soundtrack to the game as I played it, varying the timing and the notes to reflect my pace and jumps and everything! It was awesome, everyone should have a Martin hooked up to their gaming system!"







"We Create Worlds..."

Origin's motto set out its ethic of ambitious game design which it strove to adhere to with every release, including populating the realm of Britannia with hundreds of NPCs living out their daily lives in the later *Ultimas*, or in the case of *Space Rogue* and *Privateer*, creating whole miniature universes…

Money is No Object

With the backing of Electronic Arts, Origin was able to produce blockbusters that rivalled the production budgets of Hollywood movies. This culminated in *Wing Commander III: Heart Of The Tiger* (at the cost of $10 million) and *Wing Commander IV: The Price Of Freedom* (at a staggering $12 million).

THE DNA OF… ORIGIN

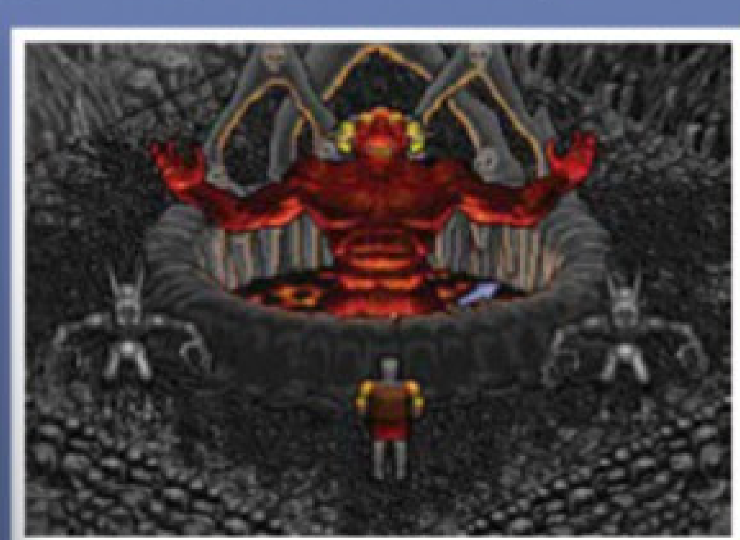
Pushing the Technology

Origin's products were always built around utilising any technical advances in graphics, sound or processor capabilities in the PC market. The only downside was that many Origin customers had to periodically upgrade their computers to play new instalments of *Ultima* or *Wing Commander*…

Striving for Perfection

Richard Garriott was famous for building every *Ultima* game from the ground up to provide the best possible gaming experience for fans. This approach meant that every release had its own identity, and flew in the face of other developers that recycled code from their previous games to create sequels.

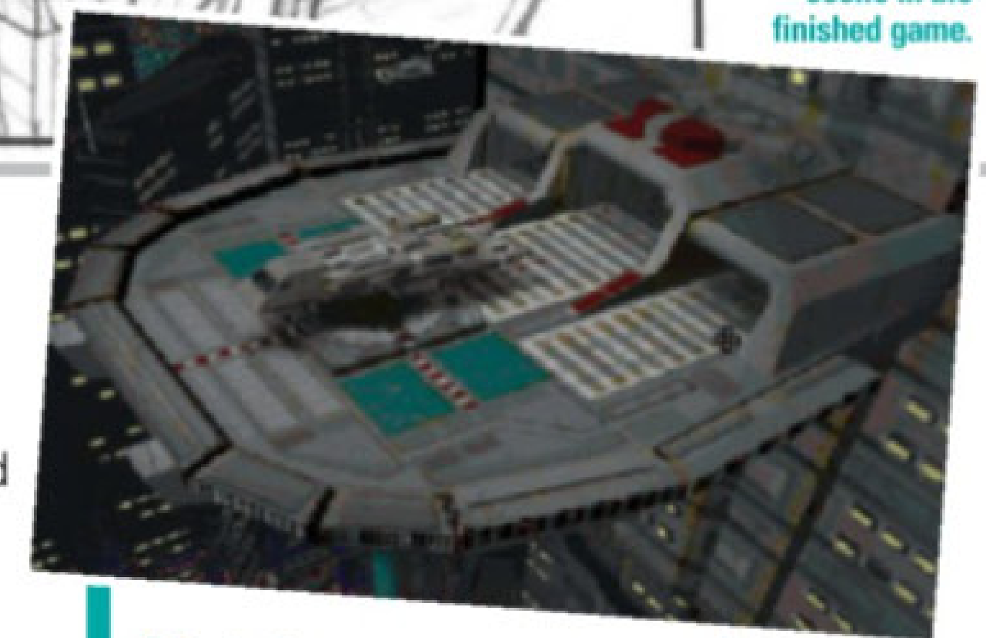




» A design sketch for New Detroit in *Privateer*…



» …and the scene in the finished game.



but back then that terabyte drive cost $30,000 and was about the size of a refrigerator… It was by far the most expensive piece of hardware we'd ever purchased."

Chris also put an updated version of the *Wing Commander* engine to use in *Strike Commander*, a jet-combat simulator with similarly presented cutscenes and mission briefings, while brother Erin produced the spin-off *Wing Commander: Privateer*. The *Privateer* series featured more free-form space-faring adventures involving trading and upgrading and refining your ship, in which players could travel to any destination they desired in their sector of the *Wing Commander* universe. It culminated in *Privateer 2: The Darkening*, another big-budget space opera with video sequences starring Clive Owen, John Hurt and Christopher Walken.

Starr Long, who joined Origin in 1992, ended up working for the company after responding to a game tester opening, and worked on many projects until being given the chance to produce the groundbreaking massively-multiplayer RPG *Ultima Online*. "Even after the interview I didn't know what the company was until I showed up to work and that's when I realised 'holy crap it's Origin!'" he remembers. "I'd played *Ultima* and *Wing Commander* and now I was getting to work there! At that point the company was still relatively small – when I started they were in negotiation with Electronic Arts but the acquisition hadn't happened yet. So I think I was employee number 30. I was one of five or six QA guys so we had to test everything from *Ultima Underworld* to *Ultima VII: Serpent Isle*, and the *Runes Of Virtue* series which were the *Ultima* games for the Game Boy." One project he remembers well was *Bioforge*, a striking 3D sci-fi adventure which was one of the first of its kind on the PC.

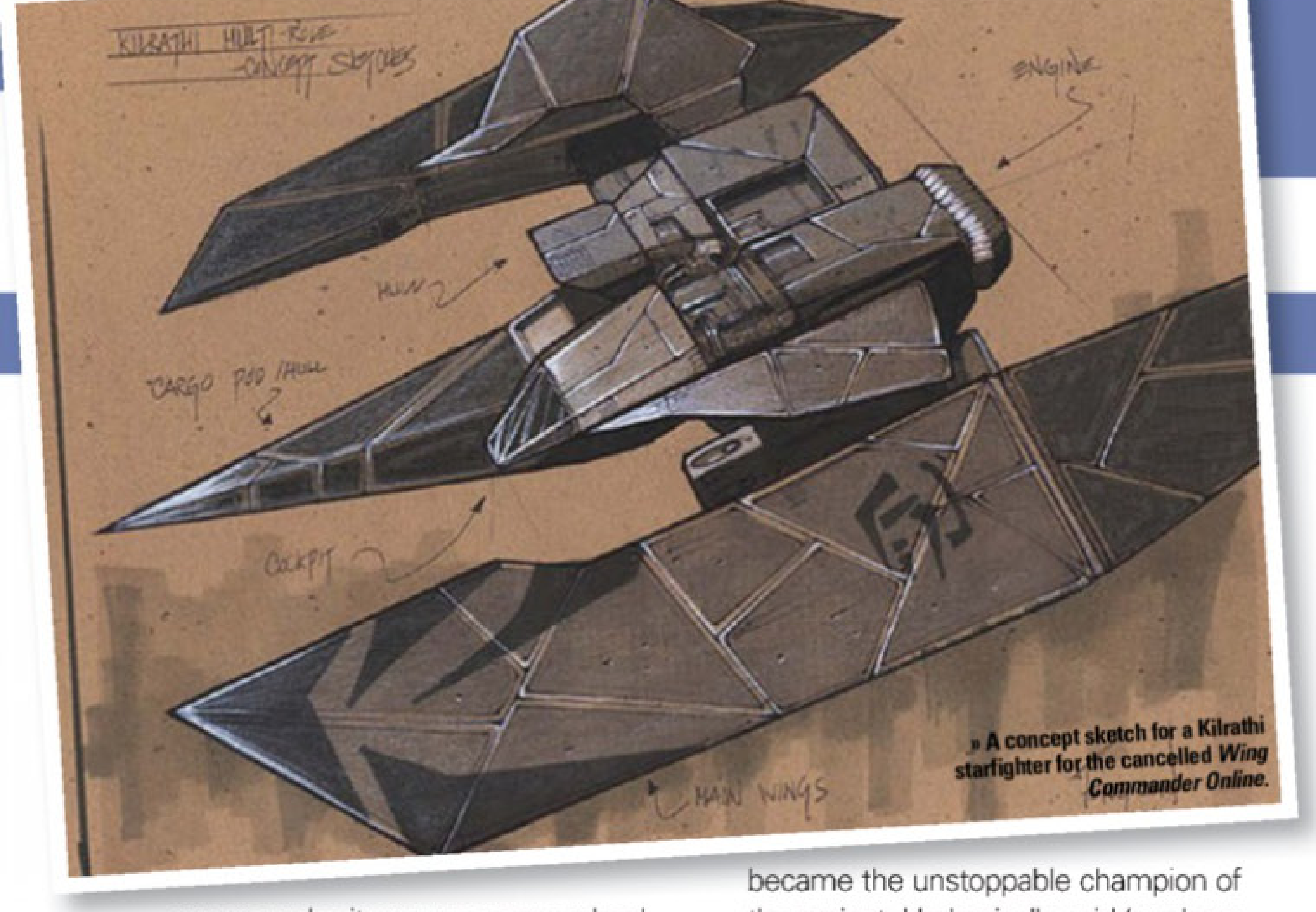
"*Bioforge* was an attempt to start up a whole new set of games called Origin Interactive Movies," explains Starr. "We were inspired by some of the third-person games that were just starting to happen. It was the first project for Origin and EA that used motion capture and this was before video motion capture, we used a system that used a version of an accelerometer using magnets. It was quite bulky; we called it the 'flock of birds suit'. There was a bunch of sensors strapped to my body with wires, with a big bundle of cables, and I was tethered to this bank of machines by 20 pounds of cables while I would jump around and wave my fists… It was one of the first games to use a fully rigged animated 3D mesh with a texture painted on it [for the player-character]."

"One of the benefits of being acquired by EA was that it wanted us to dominate the PC market and be seen as one of its top developers, which meant we were allowed to make more products. This meant the opportunity for the next layer of leadership in the

> **"We wanted to do a Wing Commander Online, and take a lot of our other properties and do online versions"**
>
> RICHARD GARRIOTT ON THE ORIGIN GAMES THAT WERE NEVER TO BE

» Richard Garriott's forthcoming *Shroud Of The Avatar* is billed as a spiritual sequel to the *Ultima* series.





» A concept sketch for a Kilrathi starfighter for the cancelled *Wing Commander Online*.

company, be it programmers or lead-designers, to try their hand at their own projects. That's what led to games like *Bioforge* and *Crusader: No Remorse*. There were some projects we spun up in the same way that didn't work so well or see the light of day. But it also allowed more external projects, like *Ultima Underworld*, which was developed by an exterior team led by Warren Spector."

Warren was a highly influential force at Origin, producing the first two *Wing Commander* titles and the cult first-person shooter *System Shock*, and contributing creatively to many other titles. "When I look back on what I think the best *Ultimas* were, my favourite stories were *V*, *VI*, and *VII*, which were the three I worked with Warren on as a production partner," adds Richard. "I think very highly of Warren and think working with him made those products much better than they would have been without him."

While the *Ultima* franchise had always been the preserve of solo gamers, a visionary decision to create an online version of the realm of Britannia, years before *World Of Warcraft*, brought multiplayer RPGs firmly into the public consciousness. "What's interesting is I get a lot of credit for *Ultima Online*, being Lord British and the creator of the original intellectual property, but it was actually Starr and I who pitched it together," says Richard. "We had been in regular contact with Kesmai and other people that were doing dial-up bulletin board games, looking at the idea of doing a 'Multima' – a multiplayer *Ultima* – for some years. But it was Starr who became the unstoppable champion of the project. He basically said 'we have to do it now, because the internet is coming into existence at the moment, and any time later than this and we will have lost the race…'"

"This was early 1995, and at the time neither EA nor Origin even had a website…" says Starr. "We began looking at what was being done in the space at that time, games like *Neverwinter Nights* and *Air Warrior* on AOL… There had been prior things like *Habitat* by Lucasfilm, but none of those had had really large-scale success, and none had been really attached to a large intellectual property like *Ultima*. Pitching the concept was quite a challenge… at one point Richard told Larry Probst, the CEO of EA, 'I'm not gonna leave the room until you give me some money to build a prototype!' Eventually we got the money to build it, and that was the seed that took off and allowed us to do *Ultima Online*."

"When we produced *Ultima Online* we believed that we had acquired a new market that was many times bigger than PC solo-player games," says Richard. "We wanted to do things like make a *Wing Commander Online*, and take a lot of our other properties and do online versions – *Crusader Online* would also have been high on our list. EA had just acquired pogo.com and were much more interested in smaller Java-based freemium games. So EA was really pushing us to do this type of smaller product which didn't really match the kind of sensibilities we had as developers or the direction we thought we should go in as a company. So a bunch of us slowly wandered out and formed a new company, Destination Games, to focus exclusively on massively-multiplayer products."



» [PC] Produced by Warren Spector, *System Shock* was the precursor to the *BioShock* franchise.



» [PC] Although released in 1997, *Ultima Online* is still running today.

Richard left the company in 2000, which proved timely when EA began laying off the Austin office's employees in 2001. The company was formally disbanded by Electronic Arts in 2004. Fortunately, many ex-Origin staff found employment at Richard's new start-up including Starr, one of Destination's co-founders. In partnership with the Korean developer NCsoft, the company was involved in supporting the North American launch of *Guild Wars*, alongside its in-house project *Tabula Rasa*. Today, Starr and Richard are still working together, on the much-anticipated *Shroud Of The Avatar: Forsaken Virtues*, a Kickstarter-funded RPG which they describe as a spiritual successor to the *Ultima* series.

Set in 'New Britannia', and with a script penned by *Dragonlance* novelist Tracy Hickman, the project is being developed by their new studio Portalarium. Its crowd-funding campaign raised $1.9 million; nearly double the original amount it had requested. "Since then we've raised another $2.5 million and are currently on a budget of around $4.5 million," says Richard. "While a lot of MMOs these days cost $100 million were still running a tight ship compared to other projects even we've been involved with. But I think that tight ship is making us more disciplined… we're making better quality decisions about gameplay and avoiding waste than we ever had previously. But I think that's good for us as a company and good for the consumer as gamers too. We have a ton of people we've worked with for decades since the Origin days, we also have many new to the tribe which is I think the best way to keep everything as healthy as possible. And if I have to think of what was Origin – what was the clear offspring of that company – this is it." *

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Richard Garriott

After leaving Origin in 2000, Richard founded Destination Games with brother Robert and key staff from his former company. In 2001 Destination Games became part of Korean MMORPG producer NCsoft, where Richard continued to develop multiplayer products until his departure in 2008. His real-world adventuring exploits have taken him to the bottom of the Atlantic to see the Titanic, on a canoe trip down the Amazon and even into space to visit to the International Space Station, where he became only the sixth civilian to enter the Earth's orbit. He's currently creative director of his new studio, Portalarium, at which he's currently working hard on the upcoming RPG *Shroud Of The Avatar.*

Chris Roberts



Chris departed Origin in 1996, following the completion of *Wing Commander IV: The Price Of Freedom*. That same year he founded his own studio, Digital Anvil, where he produced the classic space-faring PC titles *Starlancer* and *Freelancer*. After a brief career in the movie industry, including directing the 1999 *Wing Commander* feature, Chris is back in gaming and working on another crowd-funded project, his highly ambitious space-trading game *Star Citizen*.

Warren Spector

After Origin, Warren helped to establish the Austin branch of John Romero's development studio Ion Storm, before leaving to take a role as vice president of Disney Interactive. Nowadays he's probably most famous as one of the key developers of the *Deus Ex* and *Thief* franchises. He's currently developing a new certificate program for the University of Texas, focusing on creative and business leadership in game development.



Starr Long

Starr joined Richard as one of the co-founders of Destination Games in 2001, where he produced its in-house MMORPG *Tabula Rasa*. After the project shipped in 2007, he moved to Disney Interactive, working as an executive producer on children's educational titles. In 2013 he teamed up with once again with Richard at Portalarium, as project leader on *Shroud Of The Avatar.*

Minority Report

CLASSIC GAMES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED





COMMODORE 128

If you wanted to play games on your Commodore 128 then the obligatory first step was to switch to the built-in Commodore 64 mode. But as Martyn Carroll discovers, there were a select few titles that utilised the extra power of the C64's big brother

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

■ DEVELOPER: CRL ■ YEAR: 1986

■ **Of the few Commodore 64 games that were enhanced for the Commodore 128, most featured only a token amount of extra content.** *The Rocky Horror Show* is a good example, as the special C128 version adds just two extras rooms to Frank N Furter's lair – an exterior screen outside the front door and a dungeon beneath the castle. However, a quick look at the screenshots reveals that a much more fundamental change has taken place. The original C64 version was an obvious Spectrum port, with the original monochrome graphics carried over. Yet on the C128 the graphics have been given a full-colour makeover – a jump to the left rather than a step to the right. Ahem.

What prompted CRL to go back and tart up the title? We wondered the same thing, so we asked the game's programmer Paul Andrew Stoddart. He says: "We needed the Commodore 64 version fast, so myself, Jay Derrett and Jeff Lee used our technical knowledge to connect a Spectrum to a C64 so we could port all the graphics across. Then later, when Activision asked to take our version to the US market, the Americans moaned about the Speccy graphics of course. So they were redone in a Commodore 64 style by a guy called Jon Law. We needed more space for the graphics so a coder in the US had a look and found some improvements to reduce the code space (at the time I had only just got into 6502 coding and some of my code wasn't as tight as it could be). As for the Commodore 128 version, that was just a straightforward graphics upgrade using the extra 64Kb."

> "The C64 version was an obvious Spectrum port, yet on the C128 the graphics have been given a full-colour makeover"



» [C128] Flashes of lightning set a foreboding scene as you arrive at the castle.



» [C64] Compare and contrast: the stage screen from the original C64 UK version.

So there were actually three versions of *The Rocky Horror Show* for Commodore machines: the C64 original with Speccy graphics, an updated C64 release with new graphics (specifically for the US market), and finally the C128 version. Because the team didn't have to worry about lack of memory on the C128, the graphics were improved further over the already enhanced C64 US version. Many of the backgrounds were redone and the character sprites were redrawn, benefiting from a chunkier appearance and better animation. Those two extra locations were also



» [C128] Beware of the Meat Loaf stored in deep freeze!



» [C128] Keys are like those in *Gauntlet*: they open any locked door but can only be used once.

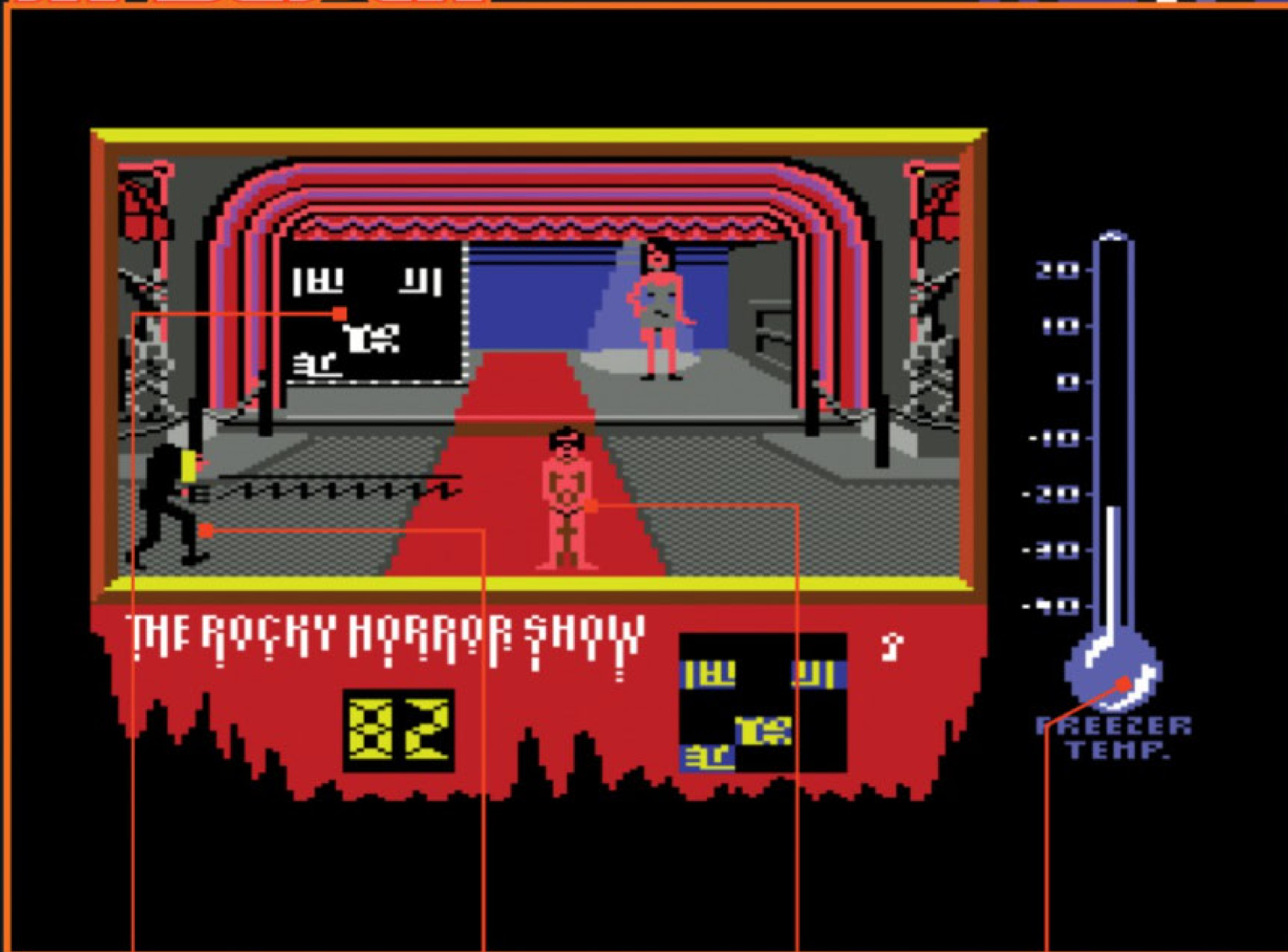


» [C128] But where is the birthday boy? Let's go up to the lab…

added, and CRL released it on disk as the 'Super Enhanced Version' in 1986. As most European gamers would only be familiar with the dowdy C64 UK version, the C128 release did live up to that lofty billing.

It's fair to say that the history of the game is probably more interesting than the game itself. Despite the new graphics, the gameplay is largely unchanged and involves you (as either Brad or Janet) collecting up bits of a machine that have been randomly scattered in various rooms – all while avoiding the castle's whacky inhabitants. It's not so much insane as inane, but if you did want to experience CRL's effort then the C128 version was the definitive release. Good luck finding a copy though – these days it appears to be less common than a quiet night in Frank's lab.

IN DEPTH



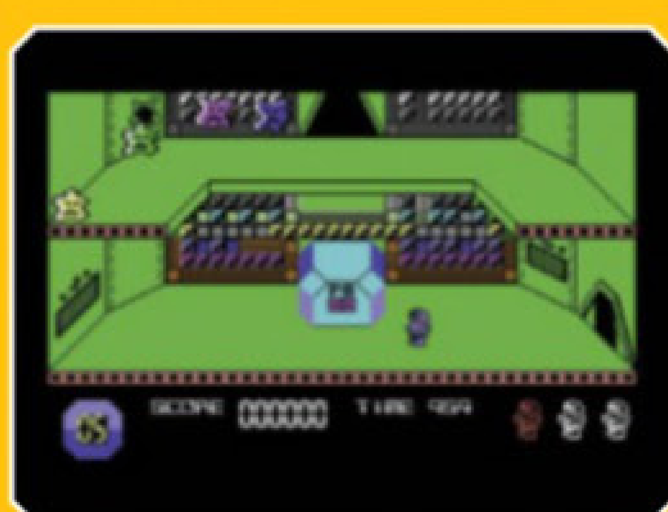
FRANK'S THINGY
■ To free your petrified partner (and win the game), you must gather up the parts of Frank's machine and assemble them on the stage – all before the time runs out.

RIFF RAFF ATTACK
■ The resident hunchback prowls the castle, trying his best to zap you with his ray gun. One hit and it's instant game over so be sure to scarper when he's around.

MAD BRAD
■ If you get too close, other characters will steal your clothes and drop them in another location. No pockets means no pick-ups, so you need to find them fast.

COLD PATOOTIE
■ Keep a close eye on the temperature gauge. When it rises above zero, Meat Loaf will defrost and try to run you down on his bike! You need to reset the refrigerator right away.

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



SPACE DOUBT
COMMODORE 64

■ This is the game that some of the *Rocky Horror* team did next, and while the setting and scenario are different, it has a familiar look and feel. The game takes place on a space station and tasks you with fending off irate aliens who chomp their way inside. It's quite difficult to fathom exactly what you need to do but it's enjoyable nonetheless.



THE WAR OF THE WORLDS
ZX SPECTRUM

■ Before the *Rocky Horror* gig came along CRL created a game based on Jeff Wayne's prog-rock record. The result was rather bizarre, as you might imagine, with you controlling a little stick man who runs around the streets of London basically trying not to die. It's rubbish, but there's something oddly beguiling about it.



BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN
AMSTRAD CPC

■ Similar to *Rocky Horror* in that this game laces fantasy with a good helping of humour. As the Bride of the title, you run around a creepy castle dodging ghosts, skeletons and other horrors while gathering up fresh body parts in order to revive old Frankie. It's a fun romp that forms a great double bill with the similar *Werewolves Of London*.

Minority Report

KIKSTART

■ DEVELOPER: MR CHIP SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1986

■ **You've got to hand it to Mastertronic. If there was a lack of games on your computer you could count on the budget publisher to take up the slack; its business model meant that it could test the water on less-popular machines.** It was one of the first publishers to target the 128Kb Spectrum, so it was no surprise when it unveiled two titles for the C128: *The Last V8* and *Kikstart*.

Both were updates of existing C64 games, yet the C128 version of *Kikstart* was actually conceived as a sequel (the title screen displays 'Kikstart 2', and the game is now generally known as 'Kikstart 128' to avoid confusion with the true sequel that followed in 1987). The game includes some new obstacles to overcome and when solo racing you're able to challenge a computer-controlled rider. The key addition is more courses: the original had eight whereas there are a total of 27 here. The game came on disk and retailed for a reasonable £4.99 but sales were disappointing. Mastertronic's figures show that the title sold 4,528 – that's just three per cent of the C64 version's phenomenal sales of 137,008. Now you know why Mastertronic released no further games for the Commodore 128.

» [C128] Everyone's favourite ramp, the ski jump, makes a welcome return.



MORE GAMES TO PLAY



» THE LAST V8

■ DEVELOPER: MASTERTRONIC
■ YEAR: 1986

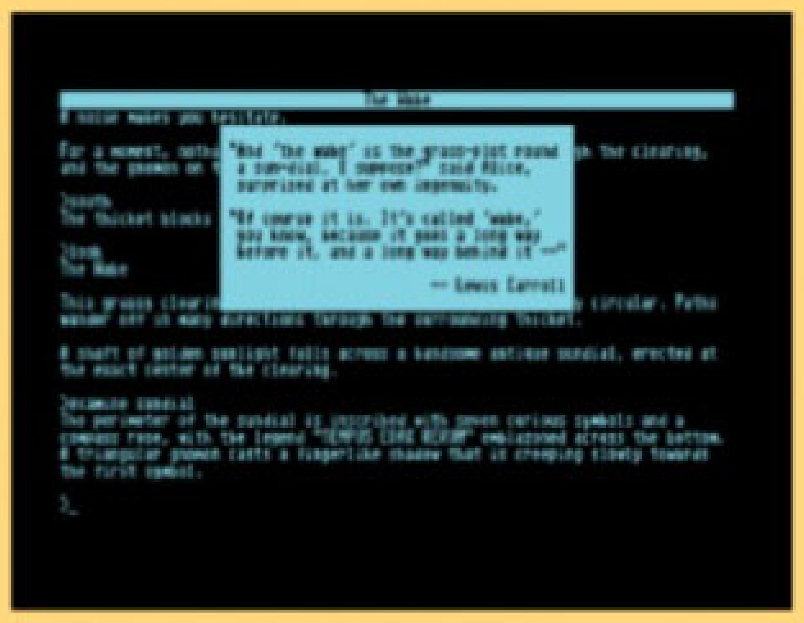
■ **This title is** best remembered for its fantastic Rob Hubbard music, so in that regard the C128 version is like a 12-inch remix. It's longer, with an extra 'prologue' where you collect up fuel rods before the main game begins, and there are additional speech samples. The controls are the same however, so manoeuvring your car remains the stuff of nightmares. As with *Kikstart*, sales were a fraction (eight per cent) of the C64 version.



» THAI BOXING

■ DEVELOPER: ANCO
■ YEAR: 1986

■ **This dedicated C128** version of Anco's Oriental brawler packs extra punch in the presentation department. While you and your opponent pummel each other's faces, little scenes play out around the 'ring' – an old guy shuffles on and watches the fight and a dog sniffs about. In addition, all of the fighting locations load in one go, whereas on the C64 a multi-load system is used, and the screen area is slightly larger too.



» TRINITY

■ DEVELOPER: INFOCOM
■ YEAR: 1986

■ **This was one** of the Infocom titles that was never released for the C64, providing C128 owners with a rare and enviable exclusive. If you enjoy adventures with strong stories then *Trinity* is a must-play. Author Brian Moriarty takes the player through time, visiting key moments in the history of nuclear arms development. It's brainy, bleak and brilliant, and succeeds in lodging itself in the mind long after you've finished playing.



» TETRIS 80

■ DEVELOPER: ECHO MAGNETIC MEDIA
■ YEAR: 1991

■ **Very few graphical** games were written for the 80-column mode mainly because the VDC chip wasn't exactly designed with gaming in mind. This version of *Tetris* shows that 80-column games were not only possible but didn't have to suck either. It features a variety of game options (you can even set the width of the play area) and plays perfectly well, although it does suffer slightly due to the lack of any music.

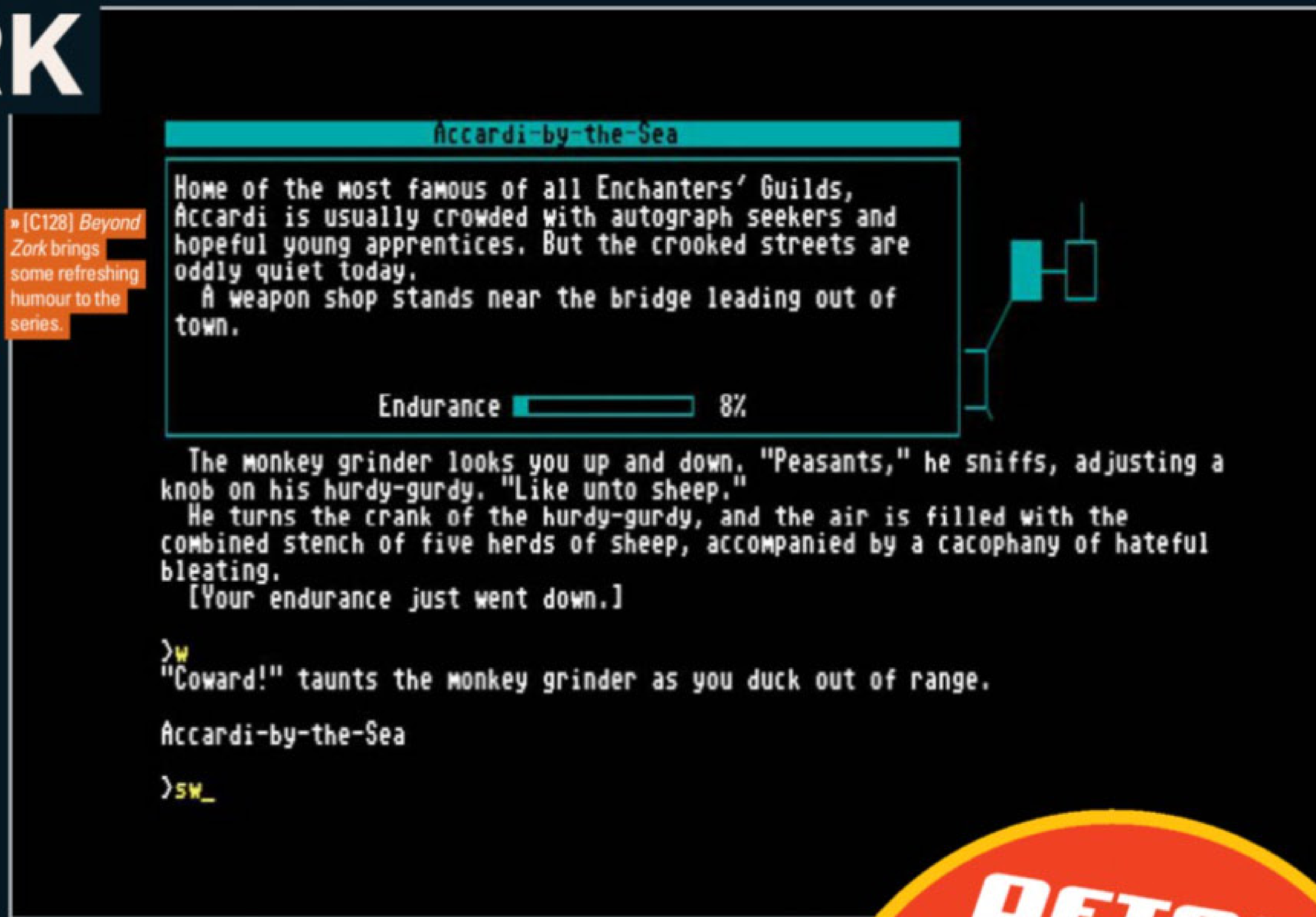
BEYOND ZORK

■ DEVELOPER: INFOCOM ■ YEAR: 1987

■ Infocom was truly prolific on Commodore computers back in the Eighties, releasing several text adventures for the Commodore 64, Commodore 128, Plus/4 and Amiga. A proportion of its titles, including *Zork*, *Planetfall* and *Wishbringer*, were released in dual C64/128 format, where you'd have the more basic 40-column C64 version on one side of the disk and the 80-column C128 version on the other. But then along came Infocom's 'Plus' range of adventures which were designed specifically for computers that possessed a minimum of 128Kb in memory. Four of these games graced the C128: *Bureaucracy*, *Trinity*, *A Mind Forever Voyaging* and this, the enjoyable follow-up to the original *Zork* trilogy.

Of the four aforementioned games, adventure aficionados would probably select *Trinity* or *A Mind Forever Voyaging* as the best of the bunch. But we're highlighting *Beyond Zork* here as it uses the VDC (the Commodore 128's 80-column mode video chip) to display an on-screen 'room map' alongside the text. This fairly simple device shows the player the directions in which they can travel and removes the need to display a list of exits at each location.

Beyond Zork is an entertaining entry in the long-running adventure series, featuring a wealth of goofy humour and introducing some rudimentary RPG elements. The package includes some nice extras, including a lovely foldout map of Quendor.



» [C128] *Beyond Zork* brings some refreshing humour to the series.



» [C128] Dark places await so you'll be needing a light source for sure.



» [C128] Your character's stats have a bearing on the adventure as it unfolds.

RETRO STINKER

» STRATTON

■ DEVELOPER: CRL ■ YEAR: 1987

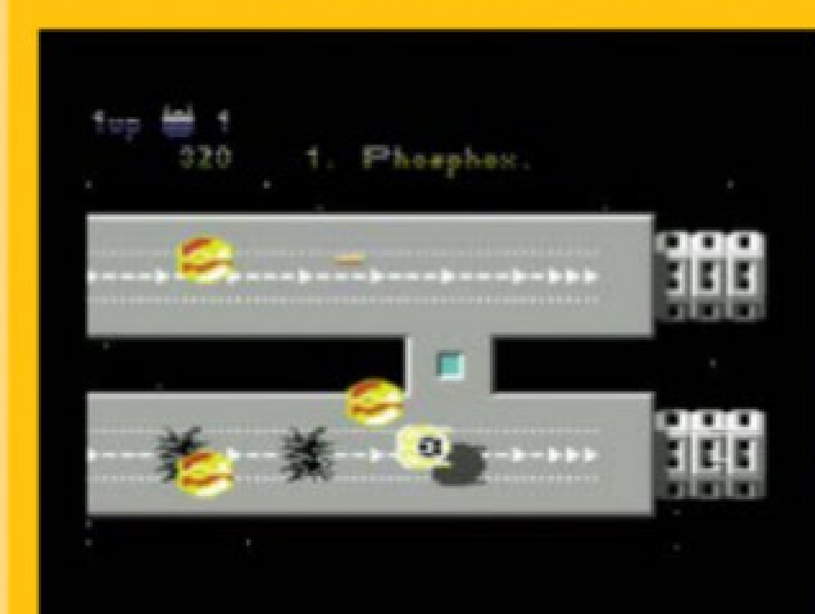
■ This maze shooter features more locations when played on a C128, yet you'll be hard-pressed to notice as all of the levels look exactly the same anyway. Technically sound but tedious and annoying.



» ULTIMA V

■ DEVELOPER: ORIGIN SYSTEMS
■ YEAR: 1988

■ Here was one release that showed how the C128's extra memory could be cleverly utilised. The game loaded on both the C64 and the C128 in its native mode, and with the latter the additional RAM was filled to reduce to amount of disk swapping required (this epic RPG came on four double-sided disks). There was also in-game music that was exclusive to the C128 – on the C64 it was silent save for the odd sound effect.



» URIDIUM+

■ DEVELOPER: GRAFTGOLD
■ YEAR: 1986

■ If you load this C64 game on a C128 (in 64 mode) you'll see '2MHz' displayed on the title screen. Now it's not possible to run the 8502 CPU at 2MHz while displaying VIC-II graphics, so coder Andrew Braybrook used a trick where, if available, the full 2MHz was briefly engaged in the vertical blank. The extra cycles increase the Manta's top speed and firing rate. Some of Braybrook's other C64 titles used the same trick.



» FERRARI F1

■ DEVELOPER: IMAGITEC DESIGN
■ YEAR: 1990

■ This C64 sim had enough depth to satisfy the most ardent racing fan, but the races themselves were a sluggish letdown. However, when running on a C128, players could hit the F1 key to switch off the stats and course display at the top of the screen, thereby increasing the vertical blanking interval and tapping the 2MHz clock speed for longer. This results in smoother, faster races more befitting of an F1 title.



» ELITE 128

■ DEVELOPER: ULLRICH VON BASSEWITZ
■ YEAR: 1998

■ The C64 version of the legendary space sim was coded by Ian Bell and David Braben, yet the 1MHz CPU struggled when it came to vector-style graphics. This unofficial C128 update (it's more than just a hack) exploits the 2MHz trick to increase the speed of the game by about 40 per cent and also introduces new features, such as an upgraded docking computer ('autopilot') and the option to sell your ship's equipment.



CLASSIC MOMENTS

Desert Strike

» **PLATFORM:** MEGA DRIVE » **DEVELOPER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS » **RELEASED:** 1992

The top brass know what they're doing, and you can tell this. Every mission brief you receive is concise, effective and logically planned out. The radars go down first, so you can get the jump on enemy forces. Then you start to take out other support structures like power stations, and finally strike at generals and infrastructure. At every level, your plan makes sense – and it's that which has allowed you this moment of power.

There's a lot to be said for a fair fight, but this is war – lives are at stake and you want the odds stacked in your favour. Luckily, an opening has been spotted and you've got a clear run at the enemy's airfields. Magnificent machines of warfare, rendered useless in their unmanned state? Great. Lots of destruction now, less risk later. Enemy vehicles scramble to stop you, but you have the upper hand – aerial superiority is assured. You can enjoy the carnage, safe in the knowledge that you'll not have to deal with fighter jets later on. For today, the war is going well. *

BIO

The Gulf War had only been over for a year by February 1992, but EA was already releasing *Desert Strike* – a game in which the American military took on fictional Middle Eastern dictator General Kilbaba. Was this controversial? You bet, but it propelled the game to enormous success, becoming EA's best-selling title to date. While the timing of the game's release certainly helped, it was the game's mission-based shoot-'em-up action that really turned heads, ensuring a wide variety of ports and spawning a series that would elaborate on *Desert Strike*'s core gameplay for the rest of the Nineties.



MORE CLASSIC DESERT STRIKE MOMENTS



Rescuing Valdez

Right at the start of the game, you know that the best co-pilot isn't available to you – he's missing in action, having been shot down over the gulf. He'll be standing by the wreckage of his plane when you find him, defending himself from infantry. Gun down the enemy and enjoy the game's best marksman and fastest winch operator.



Prison Break

The second stage sees you blowing jails open in order to rescue political prisoners. Clearing each site's defences is easy, but the real test begins when the prisoners escape – reinforcements will arrive, meaning you'll either have to seek a better position and avoid shooting the prisoners, or stay put and hold your nerve as they climb the rope ladder.



Big Damn Heroes

Desert Strike makes sparing but effective use of cutscenes, and you'll see your first one upon reaching the bunker in the first mission. Having learned its location from a commander caught as part of your previous objective, you can land nearby and watch the co-pilot storm into the bunker in full hero mode to rescue the captured secret agent.

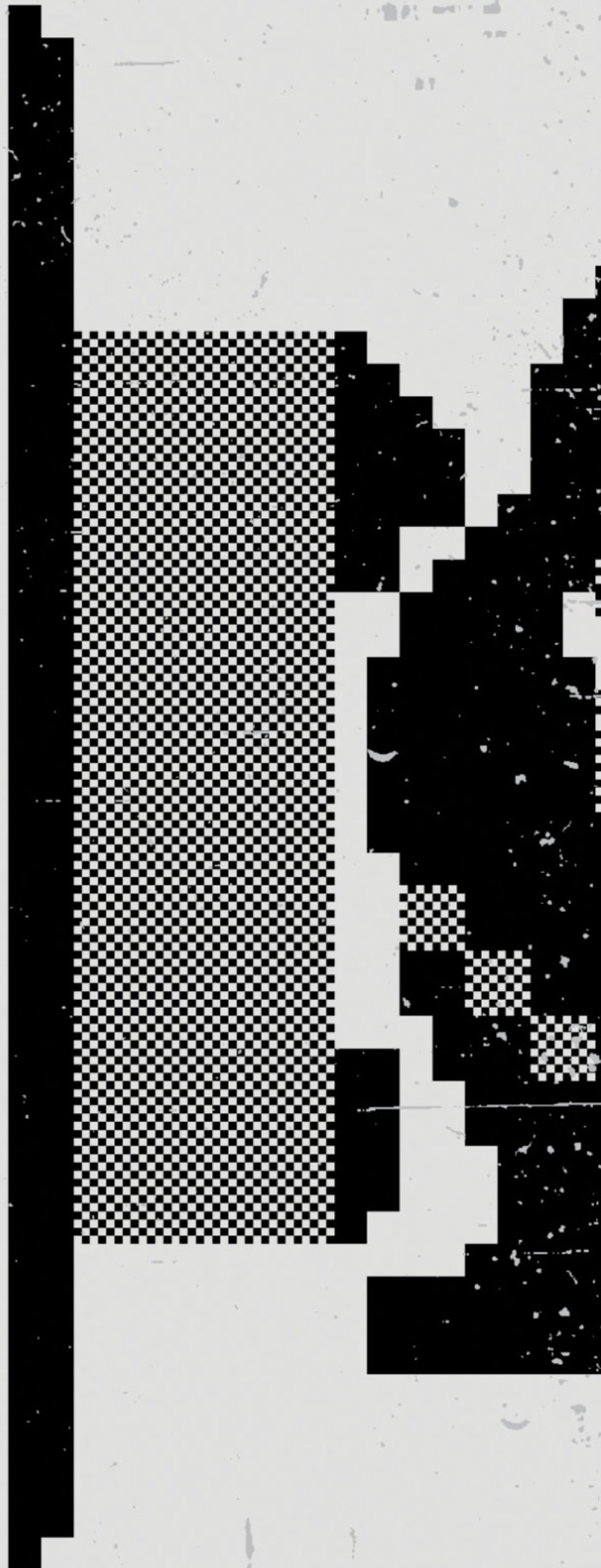


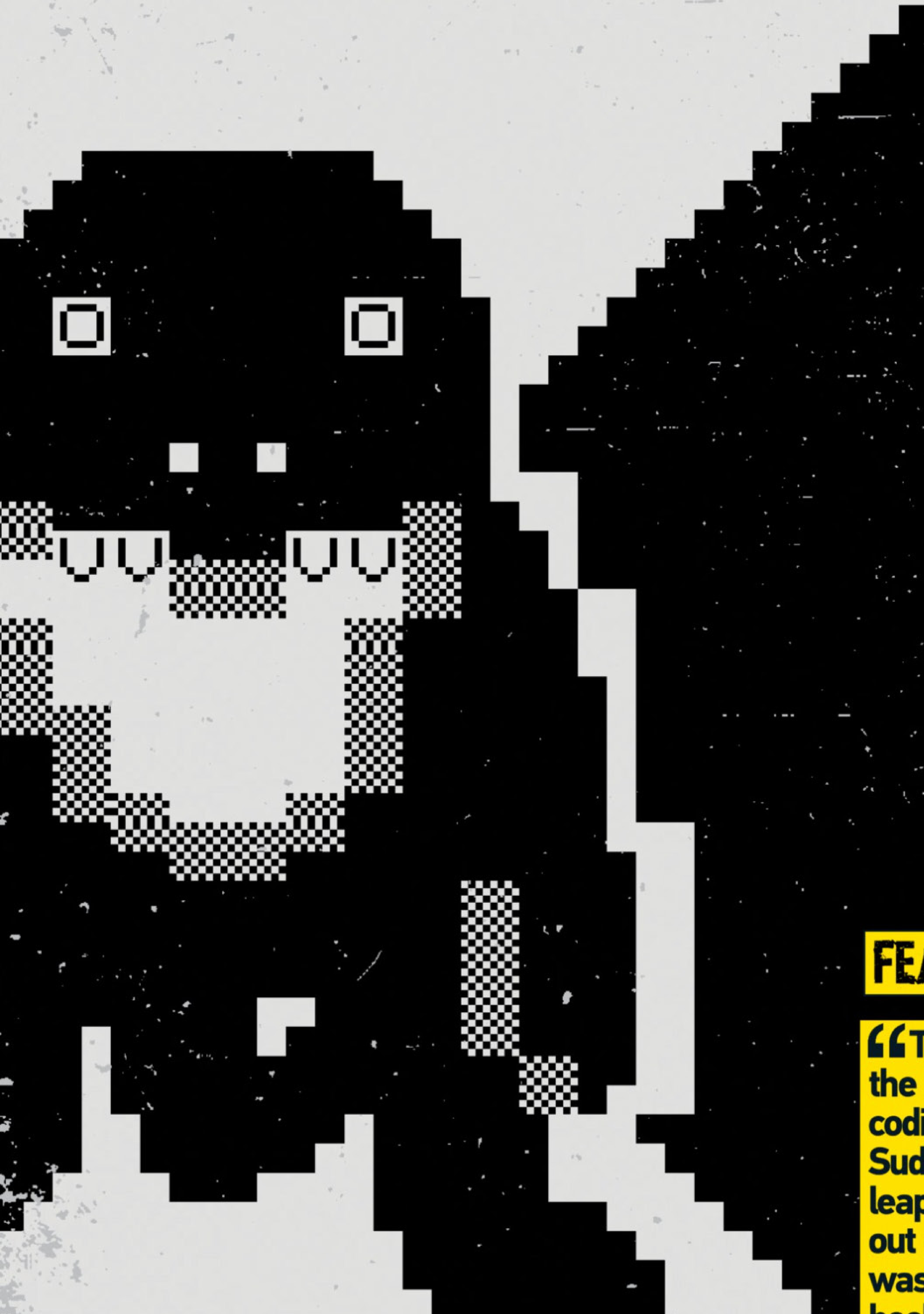
Coming Home Alive

None of *Desert Strike*'s missions are a walkover by any stretch of the imagination, and you'll barely scrape through some of them, just about making it to open water with only a couple of fuel units left. This cutscene is proof that you've made it home safe and you can jot down the next mission's password without worry. Now, exhale…

From blind panic to anticipatory dread, videogames are capable of inspiring all sorts of fear in their players, and they can do it in ways that no other medium can. Join Nick Thorpe for a look back at some of the most stressful pleasures gaming has to offer…

THE SCARIEST MOMENTS OF ALL TIME





CAUGHT!

3D MONSTER MAZE

■ **FORMAT:** ZX81 ■ **YEAR:** 1982

Scary moments come in two types: there are the short, sharp shocks that make you leap out of your skin and the longer, tenser ordeals that paralyse you with fear. *3D Monster Maze* doesn't skimp on either of them. While you roam the maze, warning messages such as "He is hunting for you" alert you to the proximity of your pursuer while ramping up the tension. The irony is that coder Malcolm Evans had implemented them to try to reduce shock – "I thought some poor old fellow might be playing my game and it could give him a heart attack," he explains.

Despite all the warnings, you're never quite fully prepared for your close-quarters encounter with the monster himself. While you're given a sense of proximity, you're rarely given the direction unless he's very close by – he can be lurking around any given corner and you might never know until you've got a dentist's view of his teeth. However, the biggest scare comes from when the T-Rex's massive frame suddenly dominates your view. You frantically try to escape, fighting the ZX81's notoriously difficult keyboard every step of the way, but more often than not you inevitably end up as a tasty snack.

FEAR FACTOR 9

"The ZX81 was in the bedroom and I was coding late into the night. Suddenly the monster leapt out at me. I jumped out of my skin! My wife was in bed reading a book and she burst out laughing…"

Malcolm Evans



FEAR FACTOR 7

JOLLY
"It was so unexpected I had to be prised from the ceiling"

ATTACK OF THE PIANO

SUPER MARIO 64

■ **FORMAT:** N64 ■ **YEAR:** 1996

Even seemingly innocuous games can induce panic, as this jump scare in Big Boo's Haunt shows. Despite the deceitful nature of scenery in ghost stages, you don't expect the piano to spring to life – and for a moment it doesn't, creating a false sense of security and making the sudden surprise more effective.

STALKED BY THE SA-X

METROID FUSION

■ **FORMAT:** GAME BOY ADVANCE ■ **YEAR:** 2002

Reduced to a fraction of her full power at the beginning of the game, Samus is thrown into conflict with the SA-X, a fully-powered clone of herself. Early encounters give you a place to hide but the SA-X soon learns of your presence, leading to some very dramatic surprise attacks.



FEAR FACTOR 8

FEAR FACTOR 7



DEKAY
"My daughter played it recently and despite the graphics it shit her right up"

WITCH

GRANNY'S GARDEN

■ **FORMAT:** BBC MICRO ■ **YEAR:** 1983

While she's not such a threat now that we're adults, The Witch brings us right back to our classrooms. That's right – as this was an educational game, they unleashed this upon us in schools. Being caught by The Witch was a terrifying way to discourage youngsters from screwing up puzzle sections!

ARACHNID ATTACK

BOFFIN

■ **FORMAT:** BBC MICRO ■ **YEAR:** 1985

For the first few rooms *Boffin* isn't too bad, but soon you'll be confronted with one that has a whacking great spider in the corner. Your one comfort is that it's not moving. That is, until you get on its level and it all too convincingly starts running for you…

FEAR FACTOR 8



FAILED FEAR

If you're looking to create some scares of your own, avoid these five flaws…



CLOCK TOWER 1996

■ There should be something genuinely terrifying about being chased by a deranged serial killer wielding a gigantic pair of scissors. In fact, in almost all respects it *is* one of the scarier moments in gaming. That is, of course, until you remember that this serial killer's ridiculous Ronseal-esque name is in fact Scissorman…



THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 1998

■ One of the best lightgun games of all time just happens to purvey some of the most notoriously terrible voice acting of all time. Every absurd line of dialogue is delivered in a disinterested, monotone voice, destroying all the tension that the game has strived to build up since the previous cutscene.



RESIDENT EVIL: DIRECTOR'S CUT (DUAL SHOCK) 1998

■ This *Resident Evil: Director's Cut* update added support for the DualShock controller. But that wasn't all it added – a new and largely worse soundtrack was also introduced too. The theme for the mansion basement is particularly execrable, ruining the scares with tuneless tooting.



CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING 2001

■ There's lots of genuinely scary stuff in here, but some of the grunts are quite chatty and like to talk when you enter the room. The only problem is that you can sometimes kill them before they speak, causing bizarre situations in which you're being threatened by someone's severed head.



LIFELINE 2003

■ This game has a very cool concept – you're cast as a camera operator, helping a young woman to escape from a monster-infested space station by literally telling her what to do. Unfortunately, duff voice recognition frequently sends her straight into the path of monsters, instantly shattering any suspension of disbelief.

WHEN THINGS GO QUIET

DOOM

■ **FORMAT:** VARIOUS ■ **YEAR:** 1993



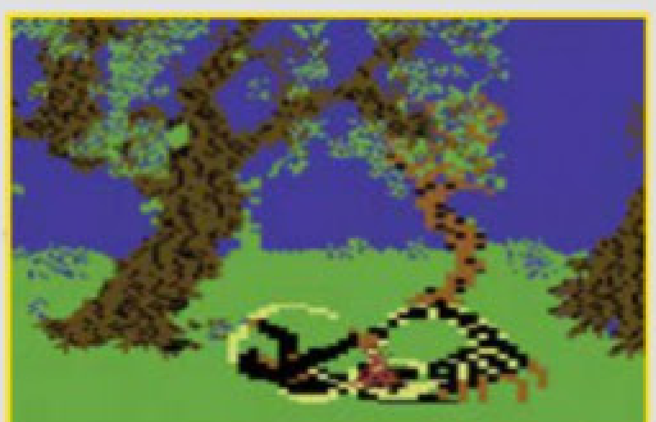
FEAR FACTOR 8

In most versions of *Doom*, you can't help but feel like an ass-kicking machine as you tear through the first stage. The enemies are fairly tame and you've got some fast-paced background music to spur you on. But it's when things go quiet that the game takes on a much tenser, more threatening feel. Your power fantasy dissolves as fear takes hold – the prospect of what's in the next room is terrifying. Later versions of *Doom* harnessed this, with a new ambient soundtrack added to the PlayStation version, and it became the series' default approach with the horror-themed *Doom 3*.

YOUR GRUESOME END

BEYOND THE FORBIDDEN FOREST

■ **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 ■ **YEAR:** 1985



FEAR FACTOR 8

The first *Forbidden Forest* had frightened a lot of people back in 1983 thanks to its grisly death animations which, unusually for the time, featured blood. The sequel really upped the ante with a greater variety of creative deaths – being picked up and fed upon was bad, as was being mauled. But for us, the most memorable death by far was delivered by the scorpion. The creature traps you beneath itself, stabbing at your midsection with its tail as you try to struggle free – and we can still hear the horrible, wailing death sound now.



FEAR FACTOR 8

CRUSTO

"You just knew it was only a matter of time until it was your turn. The tension was unbearable!"

INSECURITY CAMERAS

HALF-LIFE 2

■ **FORMAT:** VARIOUS ■ **YEAR:** 2004

High security prisons are hardly nice places at the best of times, but going to Nova Prospekt is a downright horrible experience. The place has been converted into a human processing plant by the Combine, but that's actually the least of your worries – the place has become a battleground by the time you arrive, with the Antlion swarm already having showed up. As you enter, the bloodstained walls of the cells serve to create an unnerving atmosphere. However, it's the security camera footage showing the slaughter that really sets you on edge and creates a sense of foreboding.



> "George suggested that maybe part of the time the pilot running towards the ship might actually be an alien in disguise..."
> David Fox

JUMPED BY A JAGGI

RESCUE ON FRACTALUS!

■ FORMAT: VARIOUS ■ YEAR: 1984

You never forget your first time. Starting up level five of *Rescue On Fractalus!*, you're firmly stuck into the routine of play – fly in, rescue downed pilots and get out, preferably engaging in as little combat as possible along the way. It's fair to say that after having grown used to the game, you've grown a little complacent with it as well. You're still enjoying yourself, but there's pretty much nothing new to see. So it is that you soar almost effortlessly through the toxic environment of Fractalus, take out a couple of sentry towers and then make out a grounded pilot. What you do next is only natural, too – you swoop down on the crashed fighter, lower your shield and wait as the familiar running animation plays out.

But suddenly, the TV emits a wail as a horrible bug-eyed alien starts hammering at your windscreen, trying to break in! You fumble with the keys, trying to make a getaway, before suddenly remembering that raising your shields can kill anyone standing near the ship. Unfortunately, your synapses have fired just a moment too late – the crack in your view appears and you're at the mercy of the Jaggi, and they don't take prisoners.

FEAR FACTOR 10

MAKING THE MOMENT

How George Lucas helped create an epic gaming experience

While George Lucas might be better known for his involvement in Lucasfilm than LucasArts, lead developer David Fox attributes the idea for the memorable Jaggi attack scene to Lucas himself. "George suggested that maybe part of the time the pilot running towards the ship might actually be an alien in disguise. He wanted to know if it could jump up in front of you," David recalls. "We thought that was a great idea, and Gary Winnick created the Jaggi monster for us, Charlie [Kellner] got it to animate fast enough so the effect worked, and Peter [Langston] created the scary sound when it popped up."

The striking visual was one that must have been tempting to use for marketing purposes, but the team decided that restraint was the best plan. "We convinced Atari not to tell anyone that the alien was in the game," David continues. "It didn't appear in their press material, and was only hinted at in the manual. During the first four levels of gameplay, the monster never showed up. So, by the time it happened for the first time, players were generally pretty complacent about playing the game." The plan worked to perfection – players never realised what was going to happen and were caught totally off-guard as a result.

As one of gaming's earliest true scares, we had wondered if the moment still resonates with gamers three decades on, but David confirms that it definitely does. "I still get email from people recalling their first experience with the Jaggi monster," he confirms. "People have fallen off chairs, let out an involuntary scream that brought their college dorm mates running to see if they were okay, kids ran out of the room crying to their mothers." He doesn't feel too good about that last one, but that's because he's been a victim too. "Even I would get a rush of adrenalin during that pause while waiting to find out if it were a pilot or a Jaggi… In my panic, I've killed many pilots, hitting the wrong button and turning on the shields instead of opening the airlock."





SMAC
"I can still scare the missus by moaning 'Silence the discoooord…'"



ENCOUNTERING THE MANY

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

■ **FORMAT:** PC ■ **YEAR:** 1999

"Hurry," they shout. "Run!" These are the warnings of the hybrids, humans in the process of being assimilated into the biological hive mind that is The Many. For the most part their identities have been erased, only desiring to "silence the discord". But it's their lingering traces of humanity that freak you out – in idle moments they question what has happened to them and they warn you as they're about to attack, conscious of doing so but incapable of stopping.

THE ROCKPILE ATTACKS

DUNGEON MASTER

■ **FORMAT:** VARIOUS ■ **YEAR:** 1987

We're suckers for jump scares, and *Dungeon Master* has a pretty good one. Strolling through the dungeon, you come across some rocks, and thinking nothing of it, you try to clear them. Surprise! You've upset a Rockpile, and now you've got a nasty fight on your hands. The enemy disguised as a friendly object is a concept revisited often, but the Rockpile isn't even friendly enough to tempt you into its path – it's pretty neutral, and that's what makes it so surprising.





THE FATAL COUNTDOWN

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

■ **FORMAT:** MEGA DRIVE ■ **YEAR:** 1991

This moment isn't about the death itself, though it comes with a unique animation that sees Sonic drop off the screen, exhaling the last oxygen in his lungs. No, that moment is shown in much more grisly detail in games like *Tomb Raider*. This moment is about those final few seconds beforehand, when the countdown appears on screen and *that* music starts to play, gathering pace and inducing panic. It's a theme of such psychological power that we've heard of people using it as an alarm.

DON'T OPEN THAT

PROJECT ZERO

■ **FORMAT:** PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX ■ **YEAR:** 2001

Tecmo's offbeat series is most famous as being 'that one with the camera', but it deserves to be known for more than just that. After all, this game allows fear to grip a player completely, with the designers manipulating players at will. Case in point: you never want to open a door or cupboard in this game. You have to, but always do so hesitantly. Easily the worst moment is when you hear a voice emanating from a cupboard – you build up the courage to open it, only to find… a voice recorder. Tecmo, you crafty sods!





CARLOSPIE
"It came out of nowhere, I threw the pad down and legged it out of my bedroom"

DELUSION MADE REAL

SILENT HILL

■ **FORMAT:** PLAYSTATION ■ **YEAR:** 1999

When taking a vacation in the rural town of *Silent Hill,* Harry Mason could never have expected what he was going to experience there. Having crashed his car, Harry loses track of his daughter Cheryl, but seems to see her and follows her down an alley. A bloody mess that you can only hope isn't Cheryl awaits on the other side of the gate, and things only get worse from there.

As you progress down the alley, it gets dark and a siren is heard in the distance. Suddenly, all exits are blocked and Harry is defenceless against knife-wielding childlike enemies. This is your first experience of *Silent Hill,* and a harrowing introduction to the horrors of the Otherworld.

T-WRECKED

TOMB RAIDER

■ **FORMAT:** SATURN, PLAYSTATION ■ **YEAR:** 1996

Early on in the Lost Valley stage, you'll be wondering just how much worse it can get after your first encounter with the supposedly extinct velociraptors – and it's the sound that gives you a clue as to how much trouble you're in. Dramatic music stirs and loud, crashing sounds alert you to the impending arrival of the biggest bad thing yet – a tyrannosaurus rex.

You see it as it finally rounds the corner. The tyrannosaurus is every bit the gigantic, roaring beast you'd feared, and your biggest fear of all is quickly confirmed – it has noticed you too and it's none too pleased to see you. It's fight or flight time!



DELETE ALL SAVED GAMES

ETERNAL DARKNESS: SANITY'S REQUIEM

■ **FORMAT:** GAMECUBE ■ **YEAR:** 2002

So you're happily playing *Eternal Darkness,* unfazed by the sillier effects that happen when your character's sanity is low, when you decide to take a second look at that menu screen. "You have successfully deleted all of your saved games," it declares. Just as you start to realise what's happened and start to go a bit mental over hours of lost time, the character reaffirms the hallucinatory nature of the episode.

WELCOME TO THE DOG HOUSE

RESIDENT EVIL

■ **FORMAT:** PLAYSTATION ■ **YEAR:** 1996

Resident Evil's zombies are slow, shambling creatures that can (and should) generally be dodged, and you've been conditioned to expect them in most corridors – they may be around a corner, but they're never startling after the first time. The dogs which leap through the windows are faster and more vicious enemies.

What makes this moment is the way the designers played into the habits they'd instilled in you. More or less every enemy turns up head-on, but the first dog only crashes in once you've passed its window. That alone would make a great jump scare, but your instinctive reaction is to run away – straight towards another window, where another dog crashes in between you and the door, cutting off your means of escape and forcing the fight. It's very clever stuff, which set the standard for a series that has given us almost innumerable sleepless nights thanks to its terrors.



ROBNOYCE
"It was the first time any game made me jump – it all looks so tame today but it had a naturally tense atmosphere throughout"

SCARIEST SERIES

While we haven't done a ranking of moments, some of you will be dying to know which series is the scariest of all. So, judging by the number of different moments nominated, here are the awards…



RESIDENT EVIL

■ Classic frights abound in Capcom's series – Nemesis is one of the most terrifying enemies in gaming, and then you have encounters with Crimson Heads, the Licker, Lisa Trevor, Dr Salvador… If you've never been scared by a *Resident Evil* game, check your pulse – you might actually be a zombie.

SILENT HILL

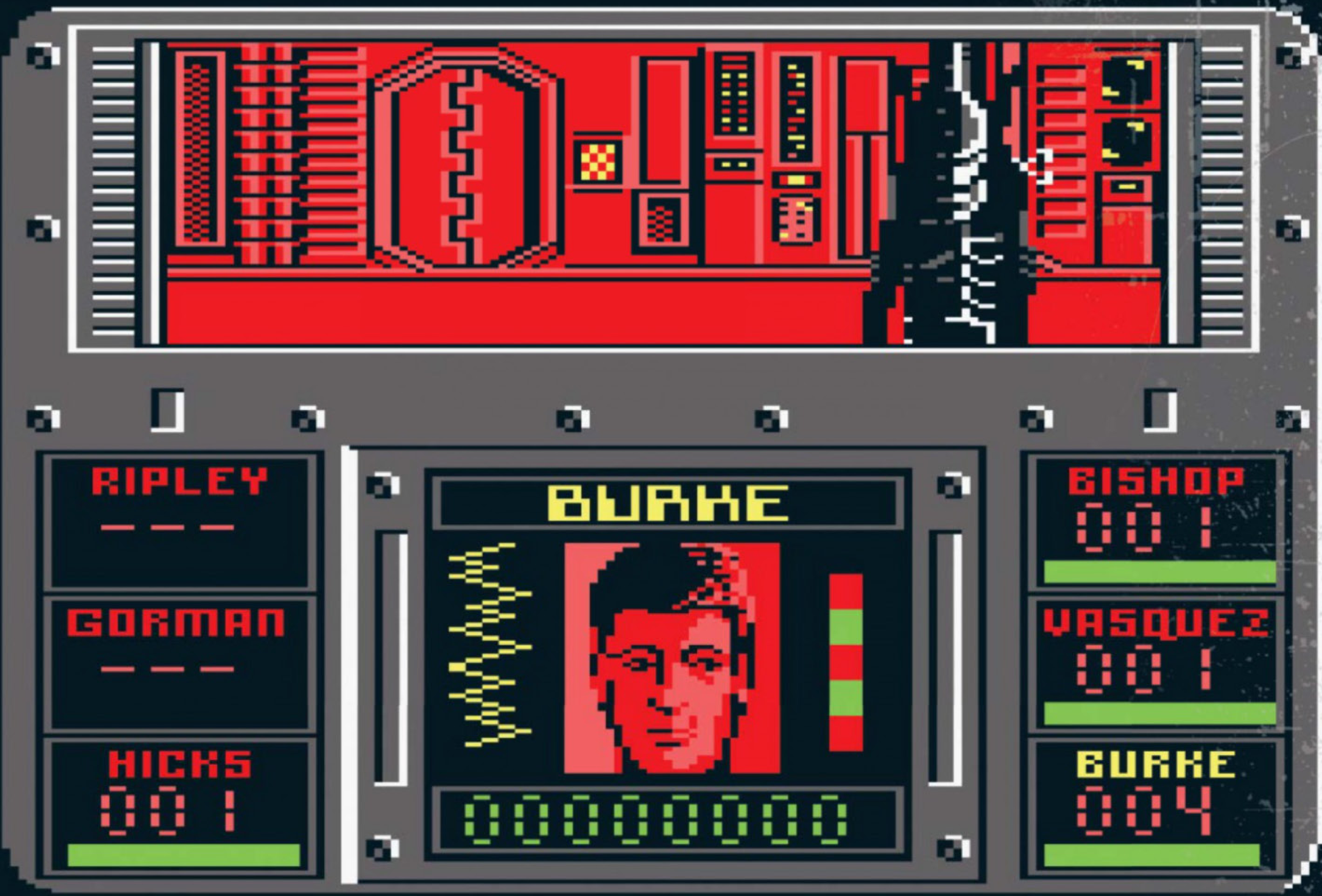
■ Konami's series tends to brilliantly subvert our perception of what is threatening in order to create its scares, as evidenced by the adoption of nurses as signature enemies. The perpetually terrifying Pyramid Head, introduced in *Silent Hill 2,* is one of gaming's most iconic enemies and has become the series mascot.





PROJECT ZERO

■ Relying less on jump scares than other horror series, *Project Zero* creates tension with some truly twisted tales and one of the most oppressive atmospheres of any videogame. The fifth game has just launched in Japan for Wii U, but might suffer the same lack of export as the fourth game.



GAME OVER, MAN! GAME OVER!

ALIENS

■ FORMAT: VARIOUS ■ YEAR: 1986

When it isn't scaring moviegoers, the *Alien* franchise is often employed as a way to scare the pants off of gamers. *Alien Vs Predator*, *Alien Trilogy* and *Alien: Resurrection* all came up when scary moments were being discussed, and Darran's reaction to *Alien: Isolation* had to be seen to be believed. All that having been said, it's *Aliens* on the 8-bit micros that first got players to the fragile emotional state best euphemised as 'brown alert'.

Right from the start, the atmosphere is tense and oppressive, with six crew members controlled from a first-person perspective and cut off from one another, accompanied only by the eerie sounds of the space station and their guns. Venturing deeper into the base is the only way to make progress, but that brings out the threat of the Xenomorphs. You can see where they've been, as they spread biomechanical growth through the space station, infesting it with eggs and face huggers. If it spreads too far, the lights will go out – and then you're in really big trouble.

But it's actually encountering one of the aliens that results in the most terror. You'll know when you've found one, as your proximity meter begins to emit an unsettling wailing sound. From there, it's a matter of time – if the lights are on, you can see it walking around and line up your shot. If they're not, you're going to have to rely on firing blind just to illuminate the room, hoping you'll catch it before it catches you. Either way, the last thing you want to do is miss your shots. Missing a close one will see the alien attack with speed and ferocity – you have half a moment to react, and if you don't, your crew member is a goner.

The last thing you see when your crew member is about to die is that alien rushing towards you, followed by the abrupt cut to static that signifies death. It's a moment that is scary without being explicit – leaving the crew member's ultimate fate to the player's imagination is all the more terrifying. The worst thing of all though, is that every time it happens – every time one of those screens turns to static and contact is lost – you're just one step closer to being alone with the aliens. Thanks to the designers' masterful work in building an atmosphere, that is a truly horrifying prospect.



FEAR FACTOR 10

GREENBERET79

"Panic, then the Alien moving along, then more panic, then the Alien moving towards you, then more panic. Then death"

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GAMING OBSESSI



Chances are if you're reading this issue of Retro Gamer at home, there's a shelf full of lovingly arranged games nearby. Most retro gamers collect in one form or another – but why do we do it? How far are we prepared to go? And what can be the consequences? Graeme Mason chats to experts and collectors alike to attempt to find out…



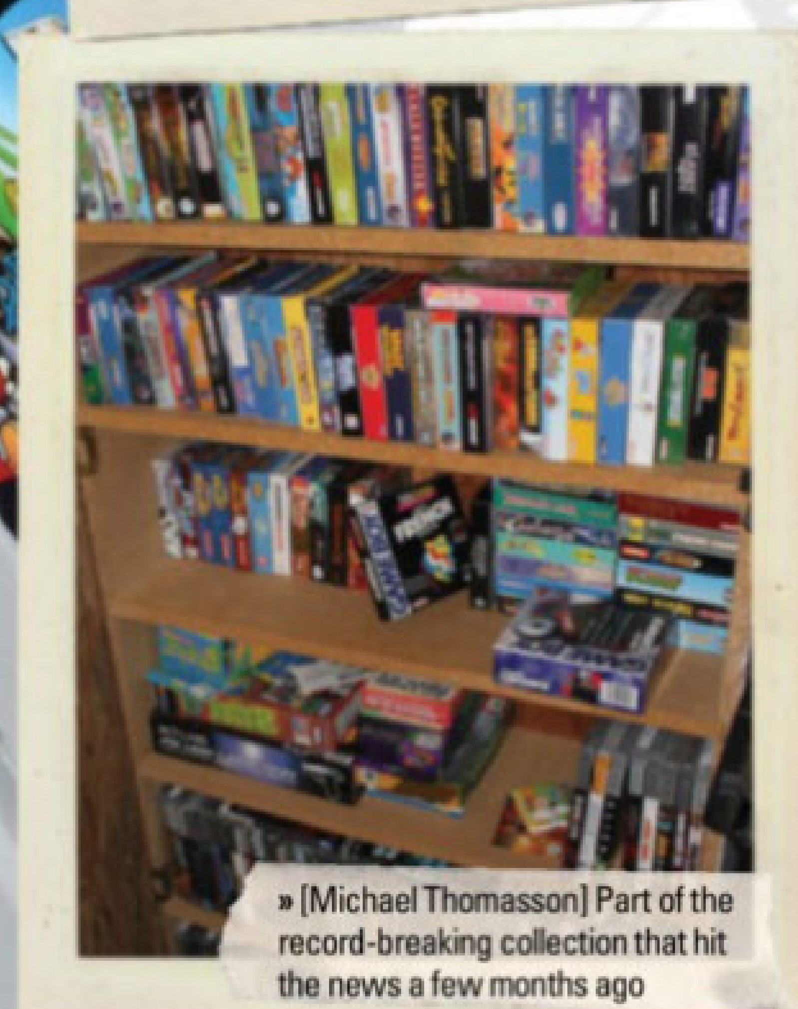
» [Leigh Hills] A glass cabinet housing the collector's most prized possessions it a must for any retro loft or room.



» [James Bull] A popular addition to many retro rooms, the Jamma cab.



» [Sjoerd Rutten] Part of Dr Retro's imposing collection.



» [Michael Thomasson] Part of the record-breaking collection that hit the news a few months ago

The modern world of social media and the all-reaching power of the internet has transformed the hobby of collecting, whether it be Kinder Egg toys, electric toasters or videogames. 30 years ago a collection of Spectrum or Atari games would sit unknown to 99 per cent of the planet; today anyone from Alaska to Zambia can gaze jealously at a pile of cardboard and plastic half the world away. Yet the heart and soul of the hobby remains. That delight at finally tracking down an elusive rare game; the self-satisfied glow of a line of colourful spines along a shelf. Arranged alphabetically, of course.

Why We Collect

But what compels us to collect? Professor Russell Belk, author of the book *Collecting In A Consumer Society*, says: "There are multiple reasons to collect, but one is that it gives us control over a finite universe. We may not have a stellar career, but chances are we can find a narrow collecting area where we can shine. Often, in collecting toys and games from our youth we may also be trying to regress to happy memories of a childhood." One of the premier websites for retro collecting is RetroCollect and co-founder Adam Buchanan told us: "The common response you will find is the regret of selling off childhood memories, coupled with the need to get them back." Sjoerd Rutten, who runs a popular gaming and collecting YouTube channel under the pseudonym Dr Retro confirms this point. "Games are a big part of people's youth and through collecting and displaying them you have a tangible part of your ▶

RETRO ROOMS

The best shrines to collecting old games

SHAUN SCOTT



■ Another loft conversion, **Retro Gamer** forumite Shaun's retro room is a spacious and welcoming gaming haven that proffers the essential shelves stuffed with games over various systems in addition to the consoles themselves, hooked up to three different televisions and all instantly accessible. Just out of view are more bookcases and the ubiquitous glass cabinet, holding some of Shaun's more treasured items. Clean lines, tastefully decorated and neat; it even has a nice rug. We bet Mrs Scott chose it.

ROSS HERDMAN-SMITH



■ It may not have the most densely stocked shelves (although a huge unit is just to the left of this image), but what appeals to us most regarding this room is the peaceful serenity that its clean white lines generate. Created with loving care by its owner, the added touch of a small set of all-white steps, guarded by Donkey Kong himself, wins **Retro Gamer** over, together with the nice tidy set of consoles beneath the television.

SJOERD RUTTEN



■ The self-styled Dr Retro on YouTube has garnered an amazing collection and one that gains him plenty of followers on the website. With masses of shelving, games are stored virtually to the ceiling and Sjoerd also makes good use of ex-shop displays to show off titles from each relevant system. Tours of his retro room and collection are among the most popular videos on the Dr Retro YouTube channel and well worth checking out.

MARK JONES



■ Ex-Ocean artist Mark collects for many systems such as the Super Nintendo and N64; yet it's with the ZX Spectrum where his true love lies and one of his spare bedrooms is a testament to some of the finest games the Sinclair machine has produced. Alongside a proud display of Ocean releases sits a complete set of Ultimate Spectrum (and C64) titles, including the elusive *Bubbler* (which Mark acquired for just £31) and Rare's *Conker's Bad Fur Day*.



» [Mat Allen] GameCube and Vectrex loveliness in the Mayhem game room.

▶ youth at hand. And it looks amazing to have all those cool games on display!" Sega Game Gear megafan James Bull cites rarity as another reason. "Owning something that only a few people in the world have? That's an exciting prospect." Other reasons include a lack of instant arcade appeal-type games today, the desire to experience games previously missed out on and those wishing to make a credible and playable investment.

How We Collect

There are obviously a number of reasons to start collecting, but what can also vary are the methods and type of collecting. In a broad sense, videogame collectors tend to fall into one of two categories: those that collect to display and those that collect to play. Of course there's a huge mingling between the two with most collectors playing games at some level; and many who are firmly entrenched in the former fall under the divisive sub-category of 'sealed game collector'. "The new in box phenomenon means that the game is in perfect condition as it came from the gaming corporation – unsullied by human hands," says Professor Belk. Yet while this may seem like madness to many who do not understand the point of owning a game and not playing it, the roots of it are not uncommon. Continues Professor Belk, "it's not unusual that a collector doesn't want the objects to actually use them, at least not in their original capacity. They are too special for that. I imagine, like book collectors, game collectors acquire a second copy if they actually want to play the game." However, the collecting of sealed games still polarises opinions like no other aspect of the hobby. Mark Jones, former Ocean Software artist and a collector since the early Nineties, is particularly bemused by the concept. "I find it bizarre and a complete waste of cash to pay over the odds for a game that is still sealed. Just open it and play the damn thing!" **Retro Gamer** staff writer Nick Thorpe is also outspoken on the subject. "I've always felt the value of a game is the gameplay it provides. If you keep a sealed game it's hard to argue you do so for the love of the game – it becomes more a packaging fetish." One of our super-collectors, Steve Bowler, who owns a complete worldwide set of Nintendo 64 cartridges, has a considerable amount of sealed games in his collection. "Recently there has been a big increase in reproductions and reseals, which is why I don't focus on buying them unless I can hold the item in my hands first. I am impressed with the people that produce physical versions of unreleased games, but I've been stung by fakes and reseals in the past." Steve learned the hard way; a set of sealed *Zelda* games on eBay set him back over £600. All bar two were reseals. But as James adds: "Sealed is the highest form of any game as it's basically new, untouched and as perfect as you can get."



» [Mat Boyle] Collector Mat Boyle poses with his favourite console, the Nintendo Game Boy.



» [Stacy Burns] With almost 5,000 items in his collection, Stacy Burns from Teloga, Georgia in the US boasts one of the biggest collections we've seen.



» [Mark Jones] Spectrum fan Mark Jones loves the Ultimate games – and who are we to disagree?



» [Ian Barlow] Collecting a particular series of games is another popular trend such as with Ian Barlow's *Mega Man* set.



» [James Bull] A rarity from James Bull's impressive Game Gear collection.

> **"Owning something that only a few people in the world have? That's an exciting prospect"**
>
> James Bull on one of the attractions of retro collecting

All Present And Correct

Another key aspect of collecting videogames is the complete set. Professor Belk notes some interesting aspects of those who go for complete sets. "The goal is often not only completion but also having better condition specimens. And one collector of paintings had collected all of Callot's prints but one, and made it his mission to acquire it. He conceded that it wasn't Callot's best work, and in fact was his worst, but as the one missing part of his collection, he would do anything to get it." This compares to how SNES collectors in particular frequently obsess over purchasing many of the inferior PAL ports of Nintendo games that have poorer performance and aspect ratio over their NTSC and Japanese counterparts. Yet, as Professor Belk notes, completion does not necessarily mean the end. "Collectors fear completion because then they have nothing to look forward to. If that point is reached, they usually redefine the boundaries in order to continue the thrill of the hunt." Such boundaries can include collecting from different regions, sealed games or even the acquisition of homebrew and unofficial releases. But what if an end actually is in sight? "Even when the object is something as seemingly mundane as beer cans, the collector often sees completing the collection as a success and as somehow contributing to art or sciences," he notes.

Of our panel of collectors, the Sega Dreamcast, with its relatively low number of PAL releases and a good ratio of quality games, is popular as a complete set system. However, as **RG** editor Darran himself found out, the desire to complete a collection when you are left with 50 or so of its poorest games – still likely to set you back around £250 – can quickly dissipate. True commitment, or a blinkered, unwavering determination is an essential trait of any full set collector. But even today, a big wallet isn't necessarily required. Trevor Nock (**Retro Gamer** forum's Nokgod) was one of a handful of collectors we spoke to with a complete GameCube collection. "I have no exact idea how much my collection cost but it certainly wasn't expensive. I picked up most of the rare and expensive games through lucky car boot and charity shop finds, trades or job lots. I'd estimate the total cost was around £2,000." Considering how even many of the GameCube's commoner titles still command a decent price, Trevor's collection proves that a patient ▶



RETROCOLLECT-IVE

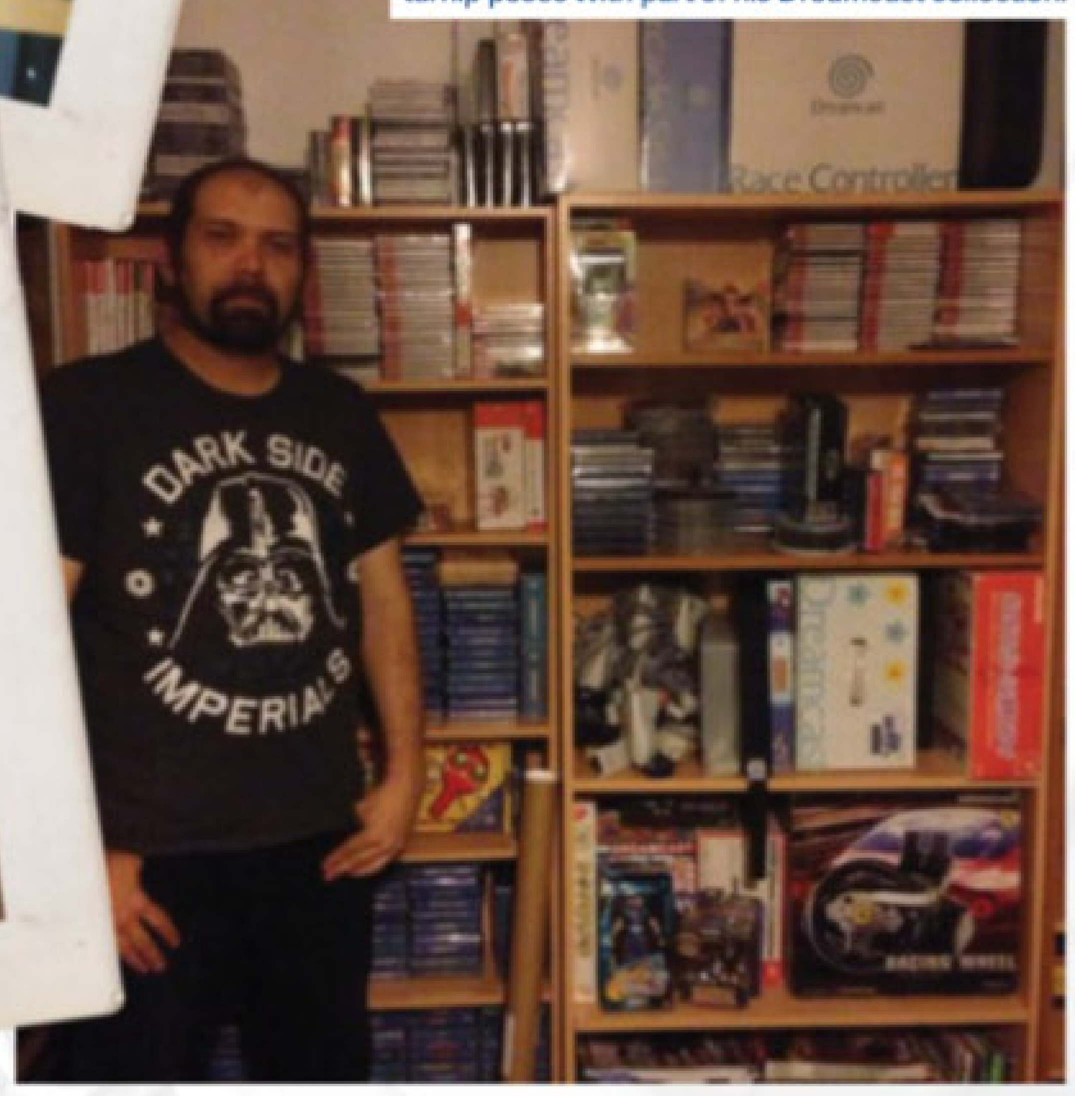
How two Retro Gamer readers took on the US-centric collecting scene

■ "After spending countless hours discontent with American retro gaming websites and longing for a European equivalent, both myself and another frustrated gamer, Jan Baart, set out to make amends," says Adam Buchanan, one half of the team behind website RetroCollect, which offers reviews, guides and valuations to collectors as well as providing an active community to discuss and trade games. "For as long as we could remember American collectors always had a wealth of information at their fingertips from rarity guides to release lists, along with various sources citing the latest news within the scene. Simply put, we wanted a similar, yet more advanced experience for gamers around the whole world, while simultaneously providing a fantastic community for members old and new to gather in." The result – www.retrocollect.com – is a must-visit website for any collector.

RETRO COLLECT
WHERE RETRO GAMERS... COLLECT



» [Stephen Bowler] Some collectors enjoy collecting for lesser systems such as Stephen Bowler and the MB Microvision.



» [Mike Phelan] **Retro Gamer** Forumite Space_turnip poses with part of his Dreamcast collection.

collector can still get what they want for the right money.

The Auction Website

Continues Trevor, "as interest in all things retro has become more mainstream, it's had the unfortunately effect of dragging in those looking to make a quick buck. As a result prices have grown exponentially over the last few years as speculative sellers have got involved." While internet auction sites (in other words, eBay) have dramatically increased the availability of all games, this is increasingly associated with a higher price tag, although many of our collectors see the site as a necessary evil. Says Sjoerd, "it allows you to buy stuff from all over the world that you couldn't access otherwise. The cost is often high, but it's a price to pay for the option to buy certain items." **Retro Gamer** freelancer, and a man who boasts over 2,700 games in his collection is Mat Allen, and he has been using eBay for over 15 years. "When I joined it was like a glorified flea market and today it's trying to be too much like Amazon. Yes, it was and still is a great place to find games, but in time speculators have come and prices quite often look like people chancing their arm. And now, even private sellers and people at car boot sales use it to justify values to their often terrible condition wares. In a way, eBay has been partly responsible for destroying a proportion of bargain hunting as we know it." This last point is particularly salient. With most car boot sellers at least aware of eBay, even if the games don't make it onto the site, prices are going to be inevitably compared as Mat states. And perhaps more telling, the majority of the big charities today runs their own eBay stores to offer what they consider the cream of their donations. For sure, the bargains are still out there, but collectors have to work a lot harder to get them, although one of the counterpoints to eBay has been sites such as RetroCollect where people can keep in touch to help with trades and availability of desired games. In addition to Facebook groups and other social media, there's no doubt the landscape for collecting videogames has shifted in the last ten years.

"It's about keeping your head on your shoulders and making it just another part of your life, not your whole life"

Mat Allen on avoiding the dangers of obsessive collecting

Got it? Tube it

"If it's fame we're seeking, then this is our 15 minutes in the sunlight," opines Professor Belk on the desire of many to show off their collections on YouTube. "Although the world may not appreciate it, chances are that other collectors will." The collector among our interviewees with the biggest pedigree on YouTube is undoubtedly Sjoerd Rutten. "YouTube has played a big role in retro gaming and collecting, showing the world what great retro games are out there and also what obscure games are worth getting. I like showing off the stuff I have because I think they are worth being shown and being talked about." Sjoerd's channel has attracted almost 10,000 subscribers at the time of writing with the most popular videos including segmented tours of his collection which have gained almost 40,000 views each. Clearly he has a point.

But what of the darker side of YouTube, or indeed the internet and collecting in general? One Sega Mega Drive collector a few years ago found popularity with his channel, frequently posting unboxing videos, clips displaying the fruits of successful shopping trips and professional gameplay compilations. When derogatory comments on the site became too much for the collector, he felt embittered, and while it is unknown whether this was a direct result, soon sold off his entire Mega Drive collection, no doubt at a fraction of the cost, and to the frustration of many who had subscribed to his channel. "People who don't share the same enthusiasm and look from the outside, see collecting as a misguided passion that could be better spent in another way," says Professor Belk, "even those who do share the collecting enthusiasm may envy and resent the display and disparage it as grandstanding." Collectors once more fall into two distinct areas: those happy to show off their acquisitions to the world and those who remain out of the spotlight, quietly adding to their collections.

A Price To Pay

While none of our collectors has experienced anything extreme in terms of the possible life-changing effects of the hobby, there's no doubt in **Retro Gamer**'s mind that the issues exist. Imagine the scene: obsessed with obtaining every last game of a certain system, combined with spending hours creating videos and playing games, someone neglects their family to such an extent that it creates an irreparable void whereupon they suddenly discover that they have lost much of that which really matters to them. "This is an extreme example," explains Professor Belk, "as most





» [Trevor Nock] Amassing console variants can be another expensive strand of videogame collecting.



» [James Bull] James Bull's amazing shrine to all things Sega and more.

collectors don't become this obsessed. Nevertheless, sometimes the collection can be seen by children as a more favoured sibling and by spouses as an outside lover. Undoubtedly when a collector spends time, money and attention on the collection rather than the family members, problems can result." Fortunately, the reverse seems more common, where the collector's family actually become 'co-dependents' to the collection, nurturing the passion with relevant gifts and encouragement. But clearly it remains a fine line.

"It's about keeping your head on your shoulders and making it just another part of your life, not your whole life," says Mat Allen, although the financial aspect can be just as problematic as **Retro Gamer** forum regular, Mike Phelan (Space_turnip) tells. "There's been a few times when I've realised I've just spent all my disposable income on something not particularly great, and that a day after payday all my money had gone. And that's caused some personal low points," he says sadly. Mike found himself not only depressed by lack of funds, but also the mountains of unplayed games that besmirch most collectors, whatever their intention. "They tended to be pretty average games and I had no time to keep them tidy let alone play them. Collecting should be fun, but that was my first experience of it becoming dull and tedious." Eventually Mike focused his collecting to the Dreamcast, although his spare room is still stuffed full of games and collectibles.

In addition to financial issues, some have argued that a behavioural habit such as collecting could be comparable to drug addiction. "The same personality types can be attracted to both," says Russell Belk, "However I would emphasise that most collectors are normal non-addicted types who simply find pleasure in collecting." So does the professor see collecting videogames as a good or bad thing? "When carried to extremes it can alienate family and is symptomatic of obsessive compulsive or addictive behaviour. But if it brings pleasure to the collector, doesn't harm family members and isn't done at the expense of social relationships and career, then it's in fact probably healthy."



» [Leigh Hills] While its effect on value is debatable, signed games are usually coveted by collectors.



» [Trevor Nock] Even in these days of eBay, bargains can still be found. This cost Trevor £1.66 as part of a three games for a fiver deal at a car boot sale.



© Brianna Blank

THE $750,000 COLLECTION

Gaming's biggest haul is up for sale!

■ There are videogame collectors. There are super-videogame collectors. And there is Michael Thomasson, from Buffalo, NY. The 44-year-old has been collecting since 1983 and amassed over 11,000 videogames spread over 113 different platforms. His complete sets include the Atari 7800, Lynx and Jaguar, Sega Saturn and Dreamcast. He collects for obscure systems such as the video cassette-based Action Max and the Tapwave Zodiac and the majority of the games are kept in his basement with other gaming rooms dotted around his house. But sadly, having already sold two collections in the past, Michael has decided, due to family illness, to sell his collection again. A highly publicised auction earlier in the year saw the Guinness Book Of Records involved and a final selling price of $750,000 achieved. Alas, despite extensive screening by videogame auction website GameGavel, a fake bidder won the auction and failed to pay. So if you have a spare few thousand dollars and the space for this amazing collection, you can still get it if you hurry! Visit www.gooddealgames.com for details.

Retro Collecting Today

But while it may all appear a bit grim, many maintain a hugely positive outlook on the art of collecting retro games. "Aside from needing to occasionally splash out a bit more, the added connectivity we now have has seen many retro gamers bunching together to help one another, whether trading among themselves or sharing links to the best steals on eBay," says Adam Buchanan. "Furthermore, with collection trackers, places to upload photos and informative sources of knowledge only a click away, there hasn't been a better time to get involved in the hobby." Despite the pitfalls of high prices, reseals, unscrupulous sellers and empty bank accounts, retro videogame collecting today remains an endearing and addictive pastime. Did we say addictive? We meant attractive… *

Our special thanks to Professor Russell Belk, Adam Buchanan of www.retrocollect.com and all the collectors we interviewed.



RETRO CITY RAMPAGE

As rumours of a next-gen release circulate we speak to Brain Provinciano about his homage to the Eighties and the NES

■ DEVELOPER: VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT ■ SYSTEM: PC ■ GENRE: ACTION

R*etro City Rampage* was a long time coming. Coded virtually single handedly by Brian Provinciano, its roots lie all the way back in 2002 when it was created as a homebrew project for the NES. History will now tell us that Brian's game moved to a variety of modern consoles, from PC to Nintendo's Wii, but the one thing Brian did keep was its distinctive look.

"The NES art style came entirely from my desire to make an actual NES game, primarily from the technical perspective," explains Brian. "As a longtime fan of the NES, I wanted to try my hand at building a NES game of my own and at the time also build something open-world. Killing two birds with one stone, I decided to do both together. Originally, the intent was to push the NES further than any other title for the system. Over time, of course, the vision and goals changed. I scrapped the NES project and moved to modern platforms but the art style stayed, since it had sparked a new game I wanted to bring to life."

One of the ways Brian brought his game to life was by featuring classic characters from a number of videogames, TV shows and films that he had enjoyed in his youth. The plot has heavy references to *Back To The Future*, while everything from the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *The A Team* are referenced. "For the most part, the references were all things that influenced me throughout my life," continues Brian, "especially of the late Eighties and early Nineties. Movies that I watched over and over, TV shows I could never miss an episode of. It's often called a love letter to the NES era, but it's even more so a love letter to my childhood – with modern twists and tweaks."

Brian soon realised however that adding so many different references did come with a caveat. "Choosing where to give nods did turn out to be tricky," he admits. "I initially pictured it referencing far more characters through the missions, but as the story arcs unravelled, many requiring a few missions to feel complete, they really stacked up. 60 missions might only mean a dozen story threads, yet the era was full of ground to cover."

While *Retro City Rampage* references many games, *Grand Theft Auto* is its clear influence. It utilises a top-down view, but throws in the occasional side-on levels. There are shops to visit, cars to jack and plenty of weapons to uncover, it's exactly how you'd expect *GTA* to look if it had somehow been released on the NES, albeit with a few changes. "I aimed to avoid the open-world plague where missions distil down to driving from A to B and shooting things," continues Brian. "However, in order to produce more varied gameplay most missions required unique features, bloating the schedule. It was the right route to take though." We completely agree with you Brian. *

THE TEAM

The people that made Retro City Rampage happen

BRIAN PROVINCIANO
EVERYTHING

LEONARD J PAUL
COMPOSER

JAKE KAUFMAN
COMPOSER

MATTHEW CREAMER
COMPOSER

INFLUENCES

The games that inspired Retro City Rampage…

TMNT
JACKAL
DICK TRACY
GRAND THEFT AUTO



» [PC] While most stages are viewed from above, a few sections of the game sport traditional side-on viewpoints.



» [PC] The story is entertaining, with plenty of classic quotes and references to various classic movies.

> **"Giving it a tilted perspective as opposed to pure top down was a must, as the front of buildings add a lot of character"**
>
> Brian on Retro City Rampage's distinctive look

THE TEAM ON RETRO CITY RAMPAGE

DARRAN JONES
■ It's a little clunky in places, but the sheer amount of creativity packed into *Retro City Rampage* keeps you playing. I've sunk around 30 hours into it and I'm not even a big fan of *GTA*-style games.

NICK THORPE
■ *Retro City Rampage* is another entry on the long list of games that I need to pick up for my Vita. I think it appeals to me because it looks a bit like the Game Boy Color version of *Grand Theft Auto*.

STEVE HOLMES
■ Like Nick I see old-school *Grand Theft Auto* buried somewhere under *Retro City Rampage*, and the irreverent pop-culture party that's going on is something to behold if you can get your hands on the game.

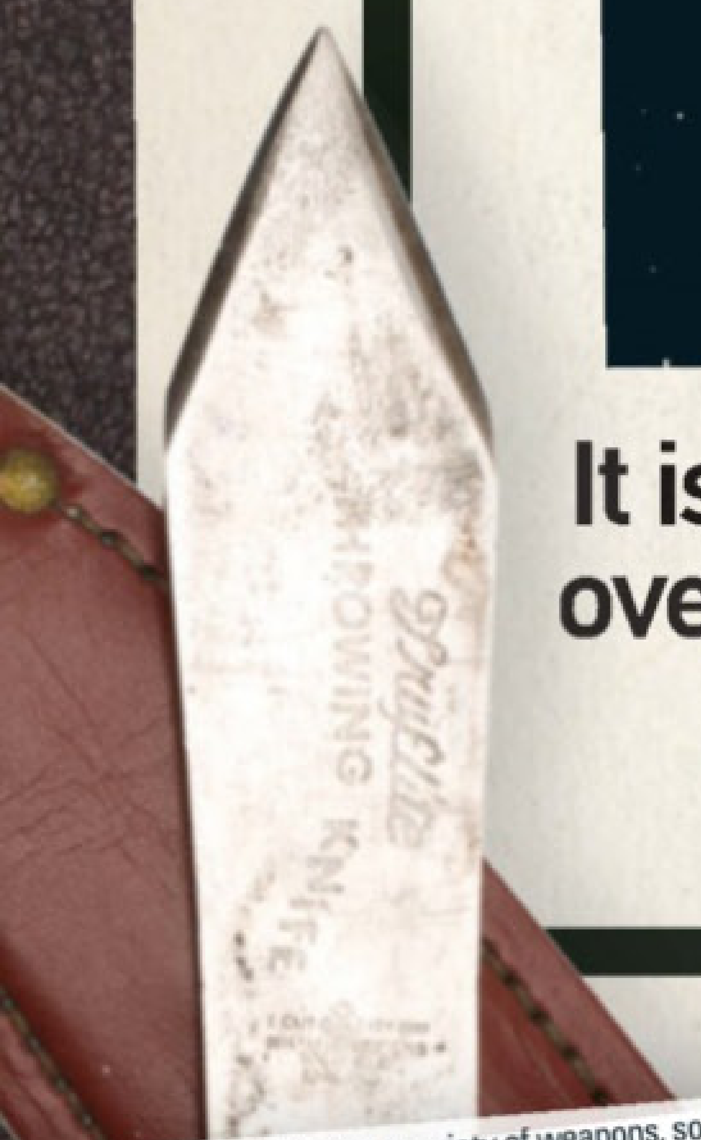
PAUL DRURY
■ I found spotting all the nods to old games almost as much fun as playing this loving homage to the games we grew up with. A witty and entertaining tribute to a time when pixels ruled the world…

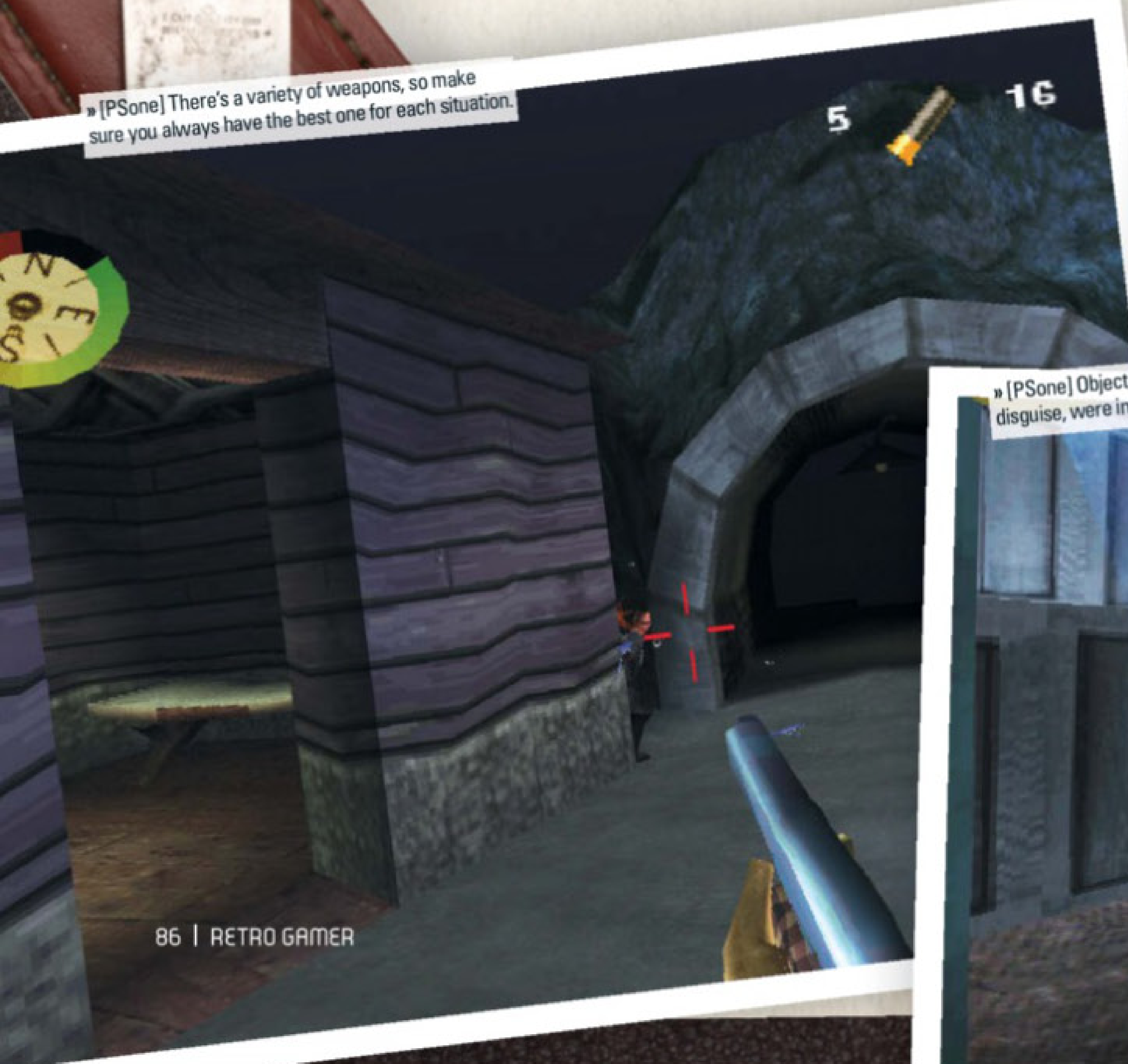
MOST SECRET

THE MAKING OF

MEDAL OF HONOR

It is one of the PlayStation's longest running franchises and was overseen by none other than Steven Spielberg himself. Ed Smith talks to the men who proved that it was possible to treat war with the utmost respect





» [PSone] There's a variety of weapons, so make sure you always have the best one for each situation.



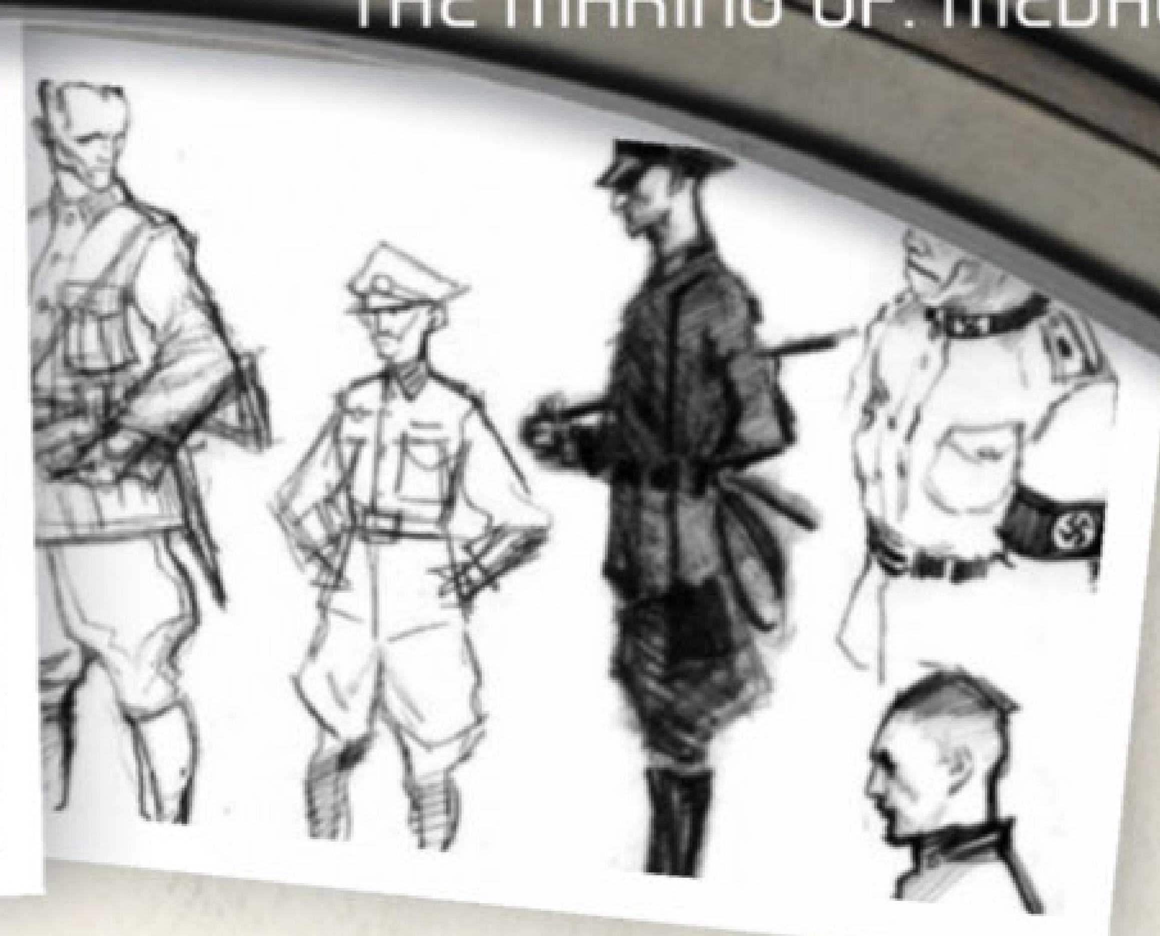
» [PSone] Being hit with a bazooka shell would spell an instant death.



» [PSone] Objectives, like sneaking about a U-boat disguise, were integral to *MOH*'s level design.



» [PSone] Hit reactions were also finely tuned, giving them game a more deliberate pace.



By the time work started on *Medal Of Honor*, the Second World War had been over for 52 years. The top-grossing films were *Titanic, Men In Black* and *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*, and the videogame charts were dominated by *Quake* and *GoldenEye 007*. This was before *Saving Private Ryan*, before *The Thin Red Line*. Though war drama was about to have a big resurgence, in 1997, it wasn't in vogue.

Similarly, the PlayStation was still finding its feet. Sony's first console had sold well, shipping around 25 million units worldwide, but the catalogue of games was dominated by just a few genres. *Tomb Raider* and *Final Fantasy VII* were the biggest hits that year, along with *Tekken*, *Grand Theft Auto* and *PaRappa The Rapper*. A studio called Insomniac had just shipped its *Doom* clone, *Disruptor*, over to Japan, but apart from that, on PlayStation the first-person shooter was yet to break through.

So Dreamworks Interactive, founded by Steven Spielberg and comprised of only 30 people, had a challenge on its hands. Not only did it want to reintroduce war history to the mainstream, but also build a sophisticated first-person shooter on an as yet untested platform. Peter Hirschmann, *Medal Of Honor*'s writer and producer, remembers the early stages of development:

"*Medal Of Honor* kicked off officially on 11 November 1997, when Steven returned from Europe after wrapping principal photography on *Saving Private Ryan*. He wanted to teach a new generation about World War Two, but knew his movie would be too intense for younger audiences. His insight was to reach young people through a medium they'd embraced: videogames

"Looking back it's ridiculous, but the idea was controversial at the time because he was proposing an FPS that didn't have high-tech weapons or take place on another planet. And this was before WW2 had come back into the public consciousness, before *Ryan* and before Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation*. Plus, we only had 2Mb of memory, so forgetting even the broader context of WW2, we first had to figure out how to deliver a fun shooter experience. Not to compare ourselves to *Jaws*, but Steven said that not having a shark that worked all the time forced him to get creative. The same went for our team."



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
» **DEVELOPER:** DREAMWORKS INTERACTIVE
» **RELEASED:** 1999
» **PLATFORM:** PLAYSTATION
» **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

Nobody was more aware of that than Christopher Cross, *MOH*'s lead designer. To accommodate the scale of *Medal Of Honor* on PlayStation, he and fellow designer Lynne Henson had to pull a lot of tricks, as he tells us. "The idea to do a first-person shooter on the PlayStation was f**king crazy. These days you think of someone using, say, the Unreal Engine and building a whole level by themselves. We couldn't do that. We had to be very careful with the amount of polygons we used because of the hardware.

"An enemy in *MOH* is maybe 200 polys – today, they don't even make hats that are less than 200 polys. So, we could only have four enemies on the screen at once. We had to work with smoke and mirrors so players wouldn't notice the enemies were backfilling. Also, we had to cut skyboxes. That's why every level takes place at night. In the end, though, that kind of worked out, since you're playing an OSS officer doing secret missions. It added a lot of atmosphere."

That wasn't the only instance where technical boundaries actually aided *MOH*'s development. As design work went on, Christopher, contrary to his initial reaction, discovered the PSone was well suited to a war FPS.

"The analogue controller was announced before we launched but we didn't design around it because we couldn't guarantee it had market penetration, so we were using the D-pad. That gave the games a really deliberate pace, since we were tuning them to the directional buttons. We had to allow time to set up the situation, to show that, say, there are three guys coming, there's cover over here, a gun on that wall. We let players figure out the situation and decide how to approach it.

"Plus, killing enemies was never meant to be an objective, never meant to be something you had to do to finish a level. Modern games have these cardboard cutouts popping up all the time – it's just a test of your switch skills. With *MOH*, you'd need to shoot one guy in the foot, one guy in the hand then one guy in the head, then come back to the other two. It was a much slower paced game. It was a lot more intimate." ▶



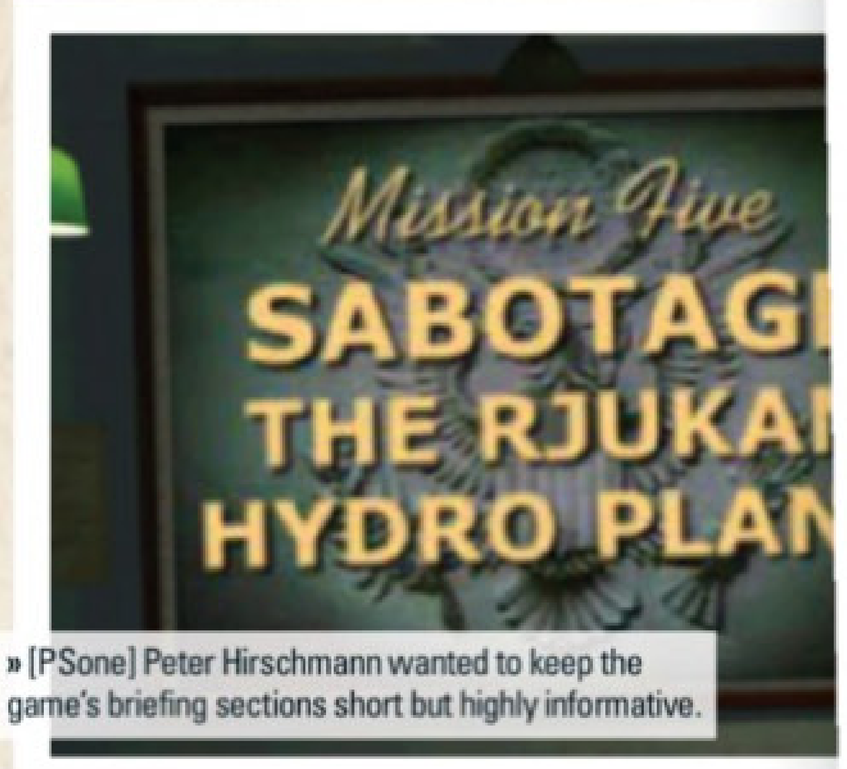
» [PSone] The OSS was used as a backdrop, since it gave *MOH*'s writers context to the send player all across Europe.

THE REAL MEDAL OF HONOR

Though he now works for Nexon – the free-to-play publisher launching Cliff Bleszinki's next game, BlueStreak – Christopher Cross has a neat idea for a new Medal Of Honor:



"It'd be based on real *Medal Of Honor* recipients, because some of their stories are amazing. There's one guy, John Robert Fox, who was a forward observer during a siege by German troops on a town in Italy. He was calling in artillery and basically, for him to actually stop the advance of the German column, he had to call in an artillery strike on his own position. They warned him that he could die but he did it anyway, and then later they found his body. That would have been an amazing mission, putting you in the position where you realise, off the top of your own head, that you have to do this and you'll probably die."



» [PSone] Peter Hirschmann wanted to keep the game's briefing sections short but highly informative.



» [PSone] Sometimes a simple gun isn't enough to get the job done.



Just as Christopher found a way to make the PlayStation hardware work for *MOH*, Peter Hirschman turned the daunting task of creating an educational war game to his favour. With Spielberg's brief in mind, he had the responsibility to make *Medal Of Honor* historically accurate without compromising its entertainment value. The more he wrote and researched, the more he found that one aspect complemented the other.

"It was key to provide as much historical context as possible," he says. "Absolutely, there was a concerted effort to give *Medal Of Honor* an educational quality, but it almost felt subversive. I didn't want to scare anyone into thinking it was anything but a game. First and foremost, *Medal Of Honor* was meant to be entertainment.

"From a story perspective, it was all about backing into it. We needed someone whose initial combat experience matched the player (ie they had none), but yet had a legitimate reason to be in the European Theater of Operations in 1944. So Jimmy Patterson was a C-47 pilot, shot down behind enemy lines. We needed a context to move him all around the continent. So bam, he's recruited into the OSS. That allowed us to cover a lot of ground. To this day, I imagine we're the only game that had mission objectives varying from sabotaging V2 rockets to saving a rare edition of the Canterbury Tales."

Just as the absent skyboxes and minimal enemies gave *Medal Of Honor* its atmosphere, the authentic World War backdrop distinguished it from other shooters of the Nineties. The game had a distinctive flavour. It lived on the principal that truth was better than fiction. "I think people actually love to learn history," says Peter. "And working with constraints will often push you to a better place. Instead of fighting the limitations, you embrace them and get to work."

But it wasn't all plain sailing. Despite the pioneering *GoldenEye*, objective-based first-person shooters were still uncommon in the Nineties. *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Doom* and *Quake* challenged players to simply get from one end of a level to another – there was no need to program in things like bombs, collectibles or stealth mechanics.

That put Christopher on the horns of a dilemma. If *Medal Of Honor* was to have this broad, authentic-feeling narrative, he and the other designers needed to find ways to make all these objectives – from sneaking aboard a U-boat to sabotaging it with dynamite – flow together. It meant a lot of scripting work and, again, getting creative with the PlayStation's hardware.

"Lynne did most of the paper designs for levels. I reviewed those, handed them off to the artists then took them back and started to add in the gameplay elements. We'd walk through the maps saying 'we're going to do this objective here, have the rail-gun here' and so on. It was very organic. But then we had to develop a scripting language that could send messages between objects in the game, something to tell an objective when it was complete or when bombs had been picked up – things like that. Things got complicated. The Wolfram level for example had lots of objectives. That meant the level couldn't exist 100 per cent in memory – it was too much. So we had to stream it all off the disc, which meant breaking the world up into compartments, so that when you walked between areas, parts of the level would load and unload in front and behind you.

"But, of course, all of the scripts still had to be associated with an object, so in that one level on the boat, the key was at the front, the door was at the back and because of the loading and unloading, when you picked up the key it didn't unlock the door because the door didn't exist – it hadn't loaded. The game didn't have an inventory, so we had to come up with a lot of creative ways to get around that."



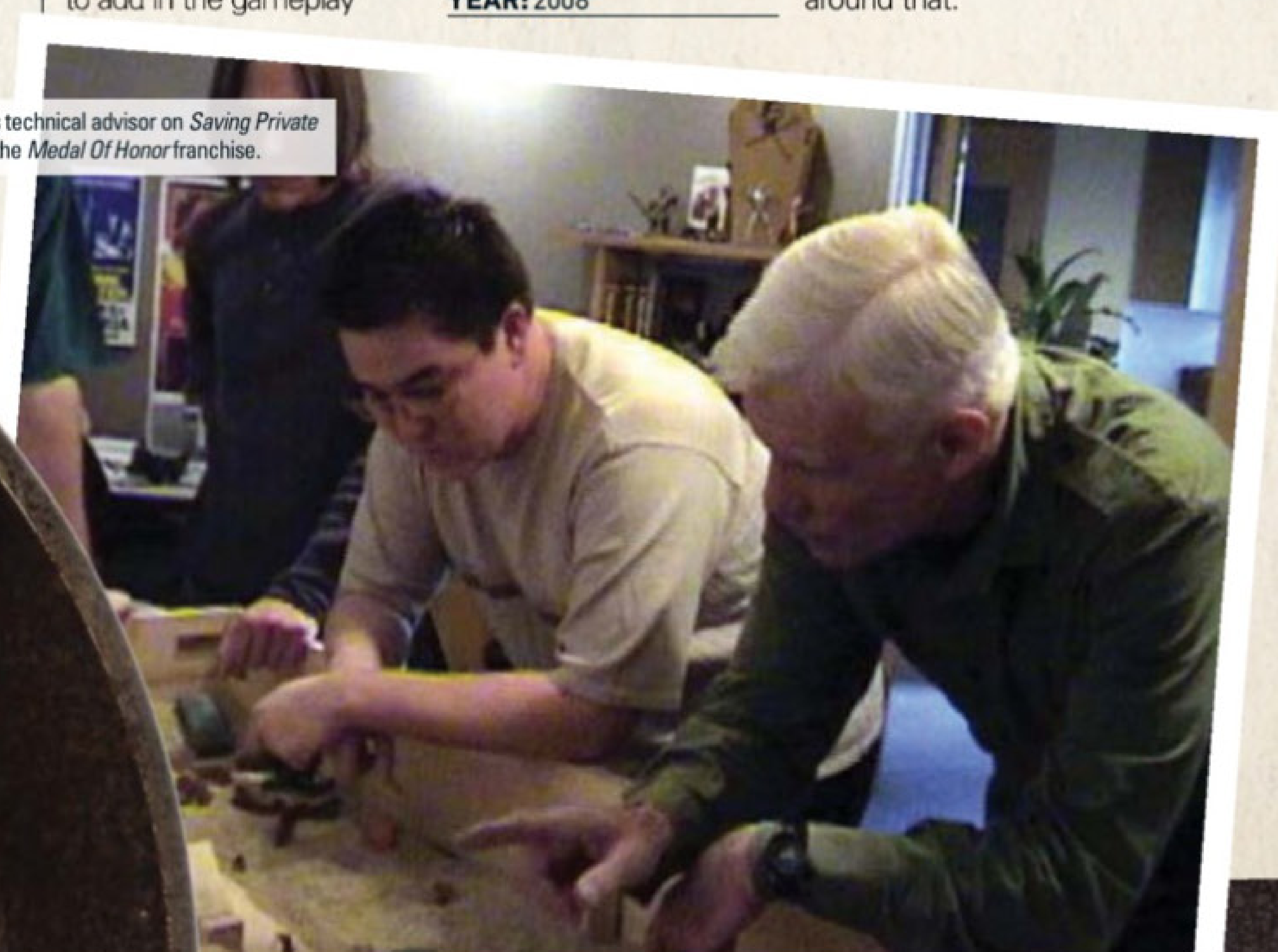
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE NEVERHOOD
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 1996

SKULLMONKEYS
SYSTEM: PLAYSTATION
YEAR: 1997

BOOM BLOX (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: WII
YEAR: 2008

"INSTEAD OF FIGHTING THE LIMITATIONS, YOU EMBRACE THEM AND GET TO WORK"
Christopher Cross



» Dale Dye, Spielberg's technical advisor on *Saving Private Ryan*, would later join the *Medal Of Honor* franchise.



After almost two years in development, *Medal Of Honor* launched in October 1999. With the fundamentals now in place, Dreamworks was free to follow it up with a sequel, *Medal Of Honor: Underground*, less than 12 months later.

Alongside *Saving Private Ryan* and latterly *Band Of Brothers*, *MOH* spearheaded the resurgence of WW2 history in popular culture. Christopher would go on to head up design on *Medal Of Honor: Frontline*, while Peter became EA's project lead on the PC-only *Allied Assault*. Two guys working for him, Jason West and Vince Zampella, would eventually break off and form their own World War Two franchise – *Call Of Duty*.

Now, 15 years and three generations since Dreamworks embarked on its great crusade, Christopher worries that the war game has gone backwards: "In *Medal Of Honor*, you were going into Germany, and you'd find the Germans sitting around a fire or taking a pee, because this was their home – this is where they were stationed. You could see a backpack propped up or something on a bench. We didn't just popcorn-spawn 50 guys.

"The intention was to make you feel like 'I f**ked up that guy's day' or 'those guys were just eating soup, damn'. It had to feel like it was them or you, not that there were ten more things between you and the next movie moment.

"We wanted people to have some connection to the Germans, which in turn would give every situation a sense of gravity. But in modern games, in the interest of speedy asset creation, they put gas masks on enemies and stuff like that. They dehumanise them. To actually do a reboot of *MOH* in the old mould, you'd need storytelling chops. But I think the monetary and market forces on these games now makes something with a bit of gravity destined to fail. This is why World War Two shooters still make sense. You know the Allies win and that the world is a better place for it, and that makes a big change about your attitude towards your own actions. It means more than just watching the Eiffel Tower blow up or whatever." *



» [PSone] You'll need quick reactions to take down certain enemy soldiers.

SPIELBERG ON THE SMALL SCREEN

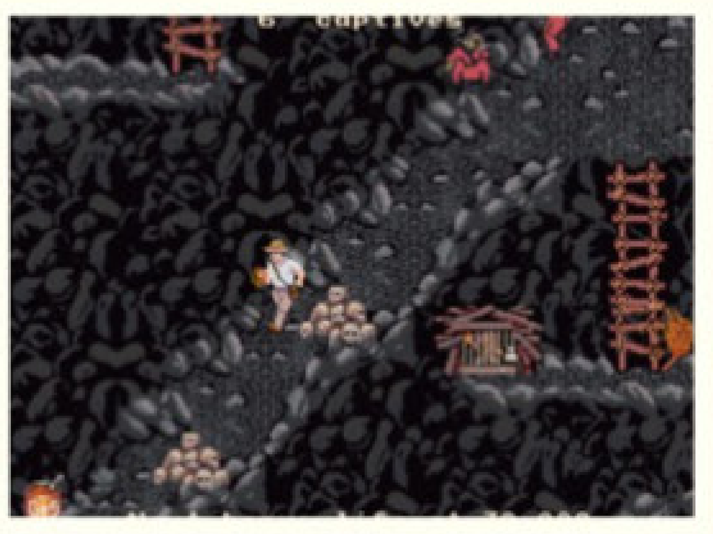
There are plenty of games based on the movie mogul's films



ET: THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

FORMAT: Atari 2600 **YEAR:** 1982

■ Commonly described as one of the worst games ever made, hundreds of thousands of unsold copies of *ET* were eventually consigned to the Atari landfill site in New Mexico, which was excavated in 2013.



INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

FORMAT: Various **YEAR:** 1985

■ A rock-hard platformer, *Temple Of Doom* is notable for its licensed John Williams score and voice clips from Harrison Ford. They're digitised, though, so they sound a bit rubbish.



JAWS

FORMAT: NES **YEAR:** 1987

■ This 8-bit adaptation of the original summer blockbuster combines action and RPG-elements, as you kill smaller sharks to upgrade your skills before taking on the daddy: Jaws himself.



INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE: THE ACTION GAME

FORMAT: Various **YEAR:** 1989

■ One of the earlier LucasArts efforts, this platformer for the Spectrum and various others featured a punishing final level where players had to race to find the Holy Grail.



HOOK

FORMAT: Various **YEAR:** 1992

■ There were several games based on Spielberg's pirate adventure, the most famous being a side-scroller for SNES, Genesis and Game Gear. The publisher, Sony Imagesoft, would later merge with Sony Interactive.



THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK

FORMAT: PlayStation, Saturn **YEAR:** 1997

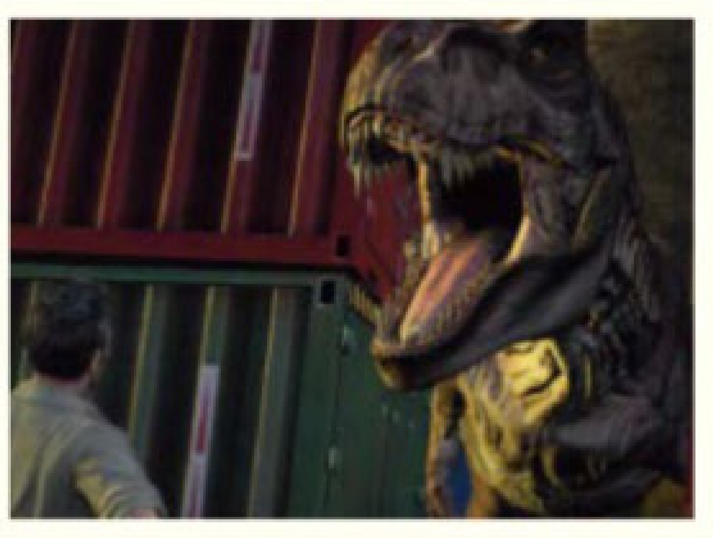
■ This was the second Dreamworks game based on *Jurassic Park*. Also worth looking up is *Jurassic Park: Trespasser*, which features the most bizarre aiming controls ever.



MINORITY REPORT: EVERYBODY RUNS

FORMAT: Various **YEAR:** 2002

■ It's strange this got panned the way it did. Developed by Treyarch, of *Call Of Duty* fame, and published by Activision, it also had an original score by *Hitman* stalwart Jesper Kyd.



JURASSIC PARK: THE GAME

FORMAT: Various **YEAR:** 2011

■ After securing a licence deal with Universal, Telltale, maker of *The Walking Dead*, produced this four-part episodic adventure game focusing on events before, during and after the 1993 blockbuster.



THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN: THE SECRET OF THE UNICORN

FORMAT: Various **YEAR:** 2011

■ Ubisoft Montpellier launched this to tie in with Spielberg's underrated adaptation of the famous Belgian comic. A sequel to that movie is reportedly in the works.

THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home

GAIAPOLIS

■ **Developer:** Konami ■ **Year:** 1993 ■ **Genre:** Beat-'em-up

■ **Konami's arcade beat-'em-ups are the stuff of legend, with huge pulling power thanks to licences such as *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and *The Simpsons*.** However, the genre quickly began to lose ground when one-on-one fighters like *Street Fighter II* hit the scene, and were all but killed off when 3D games took over. This is a shame, because it left a great number of worthwhile games like *Gaiapolis* to die a commercial death.

Gaiapolis was Konami's attempt to change its approach to beat-'em-ups, adopting a top-down perspective, a fantasy setting and some RPG-style elements to go with it. There's a story at work, illustrated with cutscenes between stages, and the game even has a password system to allow players to resume their games. You can tell that Konami was attempting to create something of an epic here, and it works quite well. That having been said, the action is that of a standard beat-'em-up with added elements, rather than a more complete hybrid.

Each stage sees players wandering around, smacking up bad guys and collecting items. The game offers a variety of pick-ups – some are standard health items while others grant experience, allowing players to level up for more health and stronger attacks. The best ones are the assist characters though, as they provide diminutive helpers who will attack enemies either autonomously or as directed. We particularly like the little lizard knight, who knocks enemies down with a hammer.

Everything about *Gaiapolis* suggests a high quality production. The soundtrack ramps up the tension nicely and the visuals are amongst the best 2D visuals of their era, with varied stages and impressively large bosses to fight. The game also maintains its pace, not slowing down even with a variety of enemy characters are on-screen.

We're not sure why this was never converted – it might not have the depth of a true role-playing game, but it certainly provides something different enough to be worthwhile. Even if the 16-bit consoles couldn't have handled it, it would have made a good early release on the PlayStation or Saturn. Evidently, we're not the only ones who liked it, as the game did eventually receive an unofficial Famicom conversion from the prolific pirate group Sachen.





» This lightning icon represents your stored magic attack. Magic is both powerful and visually impressive, but you don't tend to find the required power-ups more than once per stage.

» These boxes are amongst the many objects that can be broken in search of power-ups. It's always worth taking the time to hit random objects to see what can be found.

» Though *Gaiapolis* often tells you to hurry up, your time limit isn't very strict. Exploration isn't permitted though, as the game locks scrolling to make sure you're going the right way.

» Huge, multi-segmented bosses are the order of the day in *Gaiapolis*. They can be quite tough, so try to save your power-ups for them – magic attacks can help you massively.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: TOWER OF DOOM 1993



Capcom's attempt to bring the high fantasy of *Dungeons & Dragons* to arcades resulted in a similar beat-'em-up format to *Gaiapolis*, though Capcom's game retained the more traditional side-scrolling format. The game was bundled with its sequel on the Saturn in 1999, and on console and PC download services in 2013.

BORENCH

■ **Developer:** Sega ■ **Year:** 1990 ■ **Genre:** Puzzle



» [Arcade] Despite having a name which makes no sense, *Borench* is quite easy to understand.

■ **We know what your first question is going to be, but we can't answer it – we've got no clue what 'Borench' means either.** What we can tell you is that it's a reasonably decent puzzler, in which your goal is to guide a ball across a treacherous course filled with pits. You're given a selection of bumpers to place on the course in order to accomplish this, which can change the ball's direction at right angles.

It's a simple premise, but the complexity quickly increases. Placing bumpers becomes a high pressure activity as the ball changes from blue to red, gaining speed as it does so. The courses also quickly begin to fill up with spaces that are marked with crosses, which can't have bumpers placed on them unless cleared with a plus block beforehand.

With three consoles to support at the time, it's a given that Sega would have converted this relatively simple game to one of them if it was confident that it'd be worthwhile to do so. The fact that it didn't brings us to the conclusion that *Borench* didn't do fantastically well in arcades, possibly due to its sedate action and unusual premise.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

MARBLE MADNESS 1984



This is no puzzle game, but the active method of controlling the ball in Atari Games's mid-Eighties hit proves rather more exciting than *Borench*'s way of doing things. *Marble Madness* was converted to several systems – we like the Amiga, Mega Drive and Game Boy versions the most.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

ALPINE RACER 3 2002



Namco's sequel is a bit broader than Sammy's game, allowing for a variety of tricks and the option to use a snowboard. Unlike its predecessors, both of which could grace these pages in the future, *Alpine Racer 3* was given a PS2 port. It wasn't met with fantastic scores, though.

EXTREME DOWNHILL

■ **Developer:** Sammy ■ **Year:** 1995 ■ **Genre:** Racing

■ **It's tempting to call *Extreme Downhill* a sports game, but even a quick play of the game reveals that the game is a straightforward top-down racer.** Once you've picked from one of four skiers with different characteristics, your goal is to beat your opponent and the time limit in a series of downhill skiing races while avoiding obstacles such as rocks and unguarded cliff edges. Hitting snowmen and picking up other items will add extra seconds to the timer, which is vital when you're on some of the trickier courses as the time limits can be relatively punishing.

It's a simple game, offering only a joystick to control your skier and one button to brake, and the game exhibits a tremendous sense of speed. Unfortunately, the relatively close camera affords little warning of obstacles. That said, this is still a fun and relatively attractive game that invites repeat play. However, when you consider the decreased demand for sprite-based games in the mid-Nineties, it's easy to see why *Extreme Downhill* never came home.



» [Arcade] *Extreme Downhill*'s speed is exciting, but does make the game more challenging than it ought to be.

BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

BLOODSTORM

■ **Developer:** Incredible Technologies ■ **Year:** 1994 ■ **Genre:** Fighting

■ **Back in the mid-Nineties, the arcade fighting market was hard to break into.** Going into 3D fighting was to take on the heavyweights *Virtua Fighter* and *Tekken*, while entering the 2D fray would see you caught in the middle of Capcom and SNK. But there was a third option – go flashy. *Mortal Kombat* had its digitised sprites and fatalities, while *Killer Instinct* had pre-rendered 3D and insane combos. Incredible Technologies liked the look of this route and chose to challenge *Mortal Kombat*, upping the gore considerably in the process.

The resulting product is a failure in just about every respect. The outdated sprites clash with the more modern backgrounds and the fighting action is an absolute joke – particularly as you can be reduced to a torso mid-match but still carry on. *BloodStorm* is packed with secrets including a jab at US Senator Joseph Lieberman, who was famously appalled with violent content in videogames he'd never played. He should be glad that he's never played *BloodStorm* – the violence is the least offensive thing about it.



» [Arcade] It turns out that it's quite hard to win a fight when your guts are spilling all over the floor.

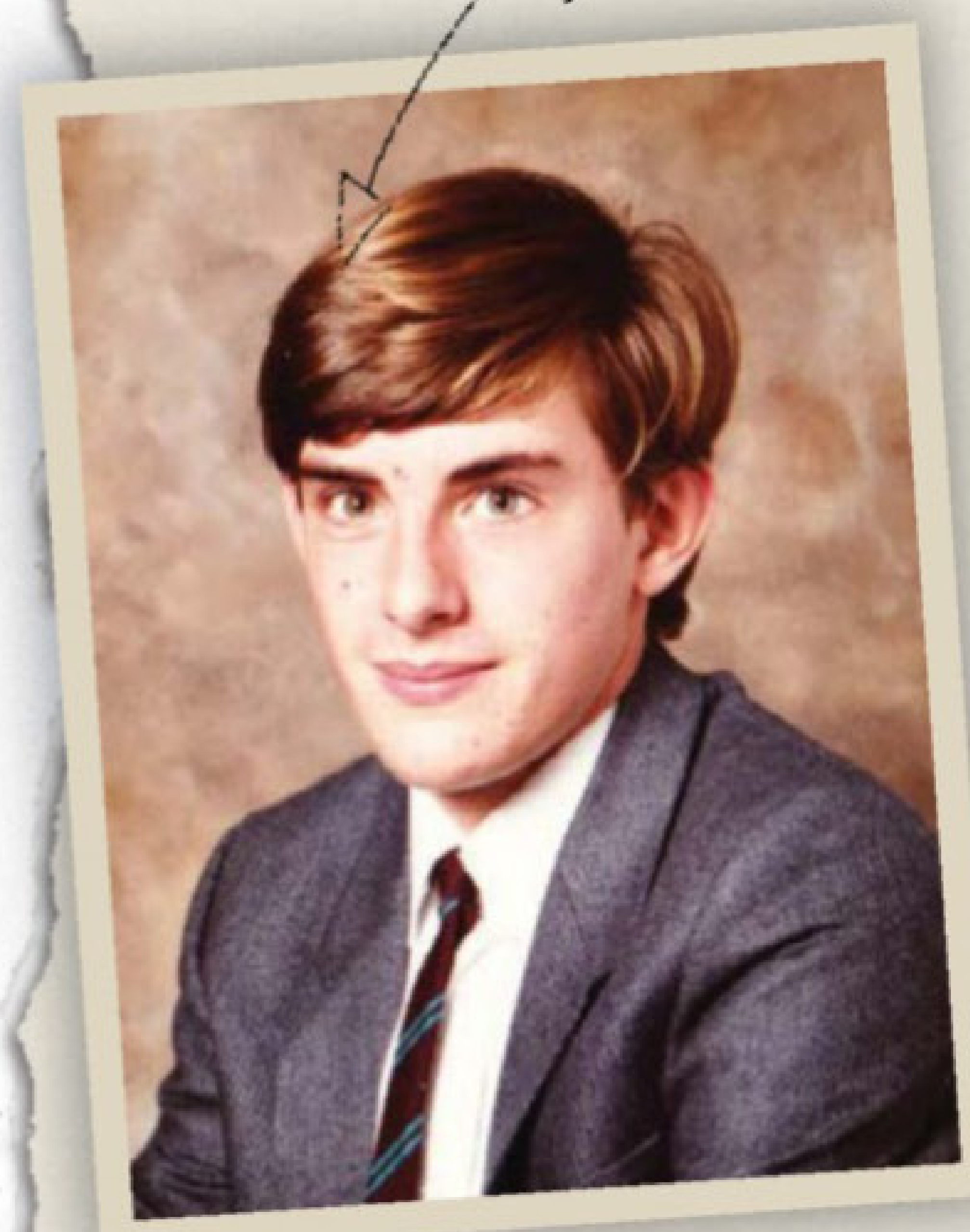
DESERT · ISLAND · DISKS

Andrew Hutchings

What cherished games would you take to the island?

Andrew Hutchings had his eureka moment coding games for the Acorn Archimedes and now makes sweet music on consoles. Paul Drury listens in...

Andrew in the Sixth Form of Ecclesbourne school in Derbyshire, shortly before swapping A-Levels for Archimedes games coding



We all like rooting for the underdog, don't we? Whether it's the non-league side of enthusiastic amateurs taking on those arrogant and overpaid Premiership footballers or the plucky contender facing the Heavyweight Champion in the boxing ring, we love to see folks triumphing against the odds. Andrew Hutchings seems to have applied this logic to games development. First he chose the Acorn Archimedes when the Amiga and Atari ST were in the ascendency and coded for the ill-fated 3DO console. When he did begin developing games for a more mainstream machine, he plumped for the Sega Saturn over Sony's all-conquering PlayStation. Is it all about championing the little guy or has he an unfortunate habit of backing the wrong horse?

"That's probably just the way I am," sighs Andrew. "I do I seem to be attracted to the less popular formats. There might be an anti-establishment thing there as well… but I have no anger. They were all my decisions!"

Andrew's introduction to computers was typical of a kid growing up in the Seventies and Eighties, with summer visits to seaside arcades, a Spectrum bought by parents for 'homework' and programming Commodore PETs at school. However, having dyslexia meant he struggled academically and, in his words, A-Levels "were a complete disaster". He ended up working in factories and offices after leaving school but always dreamed of something more.

Earning a wage meant Andrew could afford to buy an Archimedes A310 after his Speccy burnt out at the end of the decade and inspired by an early demo of David Braben's *Zarch* combined with the overall accessibility of Acorn's machine, he was eager to get coding. His first project was an homage to the aerial bi-plane duels of *Combat* on the Atari VCS which earned him £50 in 1989. With no small ambition, Andrew decided to take his game into the third dimension. He had tinkered with 3D games on his Spectrum, inspired as so many had been by *Elite*, so knew his sines from his cosines and soon his planes were made of polygons. Models were drawn on graph paper and numbers and coordinates typed in diligently in the evenings after work. "I didn't bother with a social life," he chuckles. "I was enjoying learning to code so much."

Dispensing with historical accuracy, Andrew soon had you landing a bi-plane on an aircraft carrier and speculatively sent his adventures in 3D to, appropriately enough, publisher Fourth Dimension. It was impressed by his efforts, particularly an early split-screen mode allowing two-player dogfights, and promptly commissioned a full game. "They gave me a £1,000 advance," beams Andrew. "I was earning £8,000 a year at that time. Here was someone prepared to pay me for what I already loved doing!"

> **Trivia**
>
> **Andrew and Tim called their coding partnership Fednet, the name taken from the evil corporation that was supposedly broadcasting the action from their first title together, *Stunt Racer 2000*.**

Andrew immediately spent some of the money on *The Observer's Book Of Aircraft*, which became his reference book, and busied himself coding a hangar full of diverse aircraft. *Chocks Away*, released in 1990, did well enough for him to produce an 'Extra Missions' add-on package the following year and work began on an official sequel. Sadly, *Spitfire Fury* never quite got off the ground. Andrew discovered the social life he'd sacrificed by not going to university and the joys of clubbing distracted from the rigours of coding. The Fourth Dimension ran out of patience and it looked like Andrew's career as a games programmer had stalled. "It probably would have ended there and then if Tim Parry hadn't come along," he explains. "He was younger than me and had gone to university. He lived nearby and he'd always been interested in what I'd done. I was a tiny bit of a hero to him and his friends for doing *Chocks Away*. Tim suggested doing something together and after failing with *Spitfire Fury* and being dumped by Fourth Dimension, it seemed like a good option!"

The pair took on the mantle of Fednet and swapped propellers for wheels for their first title together, *Stunt Racer 2000*. Clearly owing a debt to Atari's *Hard Drivin'*, the game combined careful engine tuning with wild racing on curvaceous 3D tracks. Add in gravity-defying loops, some surreal giant hammers and an exhilarating turn of speed and



> Bedroom coding days on the Archimedes were the best. To be able to do your own thing and get paid for it was fantastic

Andrew Hutchings

FIRST JOB
Brick tinter

CURRENT JOB
Games audio programmer

FAVOURITE FILM
The Fifth Element

FAVOURITE ALBUM
Duran Duran by Duran Duran (their first album)

FAVOURITE BOOK:
The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy

FIRST COMPUTER/CONSOLE
Atari VCS

FAVOURITE COMPUTER/CONSOLE
Xbox 360

BEST GAMING ACHIEVEMENT
Working flat out for 18 months on *Star Fighter 3000* and then selling it directly to the customers at the Acorn World show

BEST-SELLING PRODUCT:
007 Nightfire

BEST HOLIDAY
An adventure holiday in Dartmouth when I was 13

WHO YOU WANT TO BE STRANDED WITH
I ought to say my wife, Meryl

148235-467477546506546

SEX
M

NAME
Andrew Hutchings

DATE OF BIRTH
28.4.1969

PLACE OF BIRTH
Derby

BIOGRAPHY
After early success with Archimedes games such as *Chocks Away* and *Star Fighter 3000*, Andrew moved into audio programming for consoles from the PlayStation onwards and is currently working on forthcoming Xbox One title *Quantum Break*.

Timeline

1990

CHOCKS AWAY
■ **YEAR:** 1990
■ **FORMAT:** Acorn Archimedes
Andrew's debut release announced his 3D ambitions through this entertaining flight sim, which featured a diverse range of missions and aircraft.



1993

STUNT RACER 2000
■ **YEAR:** 1993
■ **FORMAT:** Acorn Archimedes
Andrew's coding partnership with Tim Parry began with this fast-paced driving game that married realistic physics with surreal track design.



1994

STAR FIGHTER 3000
■ **YEAR:** 1994
■ **FORMAT:** Acorn Archimedes
Andrew cites this as the highlight of his programming career as well as his most successful game. One of the Archimedes' best titles.



1999

40 WINKS
■ **YEAR:** 1999
■ **FORMAT:** PlayStation
Andrew became a gameplay programmer on this odd little platformer. An almost complete N64 version was never released.



Praise for Andrew

Here's what **Retro Gamer** has to say about Andrew Hutchings' games...





Darran Jones
My only early encounters of the Archimedes was at school, so I missed many of Andrew's games the first time around. I was however a massive fan of *Split/Second: Velocity*. It's an insanely intense, old school arcade-style racer that never got the love it deserved. Check it out if you get the chance.





Paul Drury
If you ever doubted the power of the Archimedes as a games machine, Andrew's work, particularly *Star Fighter 3000*, should convince you otherwise. As a fellow Derbyshire lad, it was a pleasure hearing about how he made the computer sing in a bedroom just up the road from where I was born.



» This James Bond game was Andrew's biggest hit.



» Andrew (left) and Tim basking in the LA sun after the 3DO version of *Star Fighter 3000* shines at E3 in 1995.

you had an impressive package. "It was two-player from a very early point and that was what pushed us," remembers Andrew. "Playing each other via the serial link was just so much fun. You can work on your own and create a technically perfect game but lose that sense of what's fun to play. It's a common trap for programmers."

Though Andrew and Tim undoubtedly created a decent racer for the Archimedes, the machine was reaching the end of its commercial lifespan by 1993 and sales were rather disappointing. Their response was surprisingly bold. They resolved to make the best Archimedes game ever. Furthermore, they intended to publish it themselves and handle all aspects of development and production from their respective bedrooms in the quaint Derbyshire village of Duffield. "We kind of knew it would be the last thing we'd do together on the Archimedes," says Andrew, "so we wanted to do the whole show, not only the design and code but the cover art and the instructions, the publishing, the adverts, the magazine contacts… it was a really good learning experience."

For the next year and a half, the duo laboured tirelessly on making *Star Fighter 3000* their glorious swansong. Andrew concentrated on rendering the 3D graphics while Tim worked on the maps, the contours of the landscape and getting the textures just right. Together, they created a distinctive, abstract game world, with crazy, screen-filling explosions, particle effects and polygons aplenty. Swooping over their strange land was a visual treat and being able to command wingmen to seek and destroy targets was an innovative feature, adding some strategy to the frenzied air battles. It undoubtedly showcased the often-underappreciated power of the Archimedes as a games machine, though the brutal difficulty level did distract from the experience. "I think gameplay just came second," admits Andrew. "We put a ridiculous amount of effort into it but its technical achievement outshone its gameplay achievement."

With the game complete, they arrived at the Acorn World show in 1994, cadged some space on Tim's graphic artist brother's stand and set about selling *Star Fighter 3000* directly to attendees. The graphical wizardry turned many heads and soon the money was rolling in over the little trestle table. That night, they got to live out a little fantasy. "At the end of that first day we had a few thousand in cash," recalls Andrew. "We went back to our hotel room and started throwing it around, tired but happy!"

It wasn't the last payday for the pair, either. Having made around £10,000 each through sales, they were contacted by ARM Limited, which wanted to use the game as part of its pitch to convince Nintendo the ARM chip was the way to go for its forthcoming handheld. "It was the most profitable day of my life," laughs Andrew. "They paid us £2,000 to do a special version of *Star Fighter* which took us an afternoon. They were happy and it worked out for them as they got to do the Game Boy Advance."

The game was becoming a highly lucrative calling-card for Andrew and Tim, who were soon contacted by Tony Kavangh, co-founder of Krisalis software. The company had a profitable niche doing Archimedes conversions of big

2001



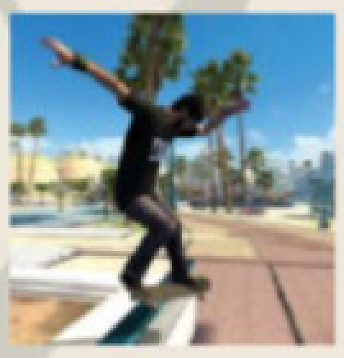
007: NIGHTFIRE
■ **YEAR:** 2001
■ **FORMAT:** Various
Moving into audio programming, Andrew worked on the award-winning interactive score for this Bond game, published by EA.

2010



SPLIT/SECOND: VELOCITY
■ **YEAR:** 2010
■ **FORMAT:** PS3/Xbox360/PC
The reality TV setting for this racing game echoes Andrew's earlier *Stunt Racer 2000*. A sequel was planned but canned as Disney took a different road.

2014



TONY HAWK SHRED SESSION
■ **YEAR:** 2014
■ **FORMAT:** iOS/Android
Andrew moved from consoles to handheld, and this 'old skater becomes infinite runner' concept is worth a swipe.

2015



QUANTUM BREAK
■ **YEAR:** 2015
■ **FORMAT:** Xbox One
Andrew's current project is this time-mangling, third-person action title from Remedy, the clever folks behind the excellent *Alan Wake*.

The Fight Goes On

"I remember wanting to do some things with *Star Fighter 3000* that never got made," explains Andrew on his decision to produce a sequel to his biggest success. "*Space Fighter 4000* had buildings and spaceships that separated on destruction and true rotating gun turrets. I had great fun programming the trajectory and aim of a moving turret on an enemy ship to hit the player. For me to be motivated as a hobbyist, I feel it has to be something I haven't achieved yet." Andrew entered the game in Microsoft's Dream.Build. Play competition in 2011 and you can still find it on Xbox Live Indie Games, though Andrew is the first to admit it's more a demo than a full game. However, it is encouraging for those who'd love to see a proper reboot eventually. "If I ever get round to doing anything again, it'll probably be *Star Fighter 5000*!" He promises.

titles and Tony offered Fednet a generous three-game deal, beginning with converting *Star Fighter 3000* to the new consoles of the day. The boys moved up to Krisalis's offices in Rotherham and personally handled the 3DO release. "It was a weird kind of hybrid," remembers Andrew. "We were still using the Archimedes to edit the code for the 3DO but we did try to improve it. It was a bit rushed but *EDGE* magazine gave it 7/10, which is pretty good for them!"

The game was named '3DO 3D Graphics Game of the Year' in 1995 and versions of *Star Fighter* appeared on the PlayStation, Saturn, PC and Apple Mac the following year. These were handled by in-house teams, however, as Tony was keen for Andrew and Tim to concentrate on delivering their next big hit. Inspired by the 'killer' mode in *Stunt Racer*, which involved head-to-head, race-based combat in large, hazard-filled arenas, the boys began work on *Death Racer* for the Sega Saturn. The concept seemed strong, even if the choice of platform was determined by the relative cheapness of the Saturn's devkit compared to the PlayStation's, but the game's development was far from a smooth ride.

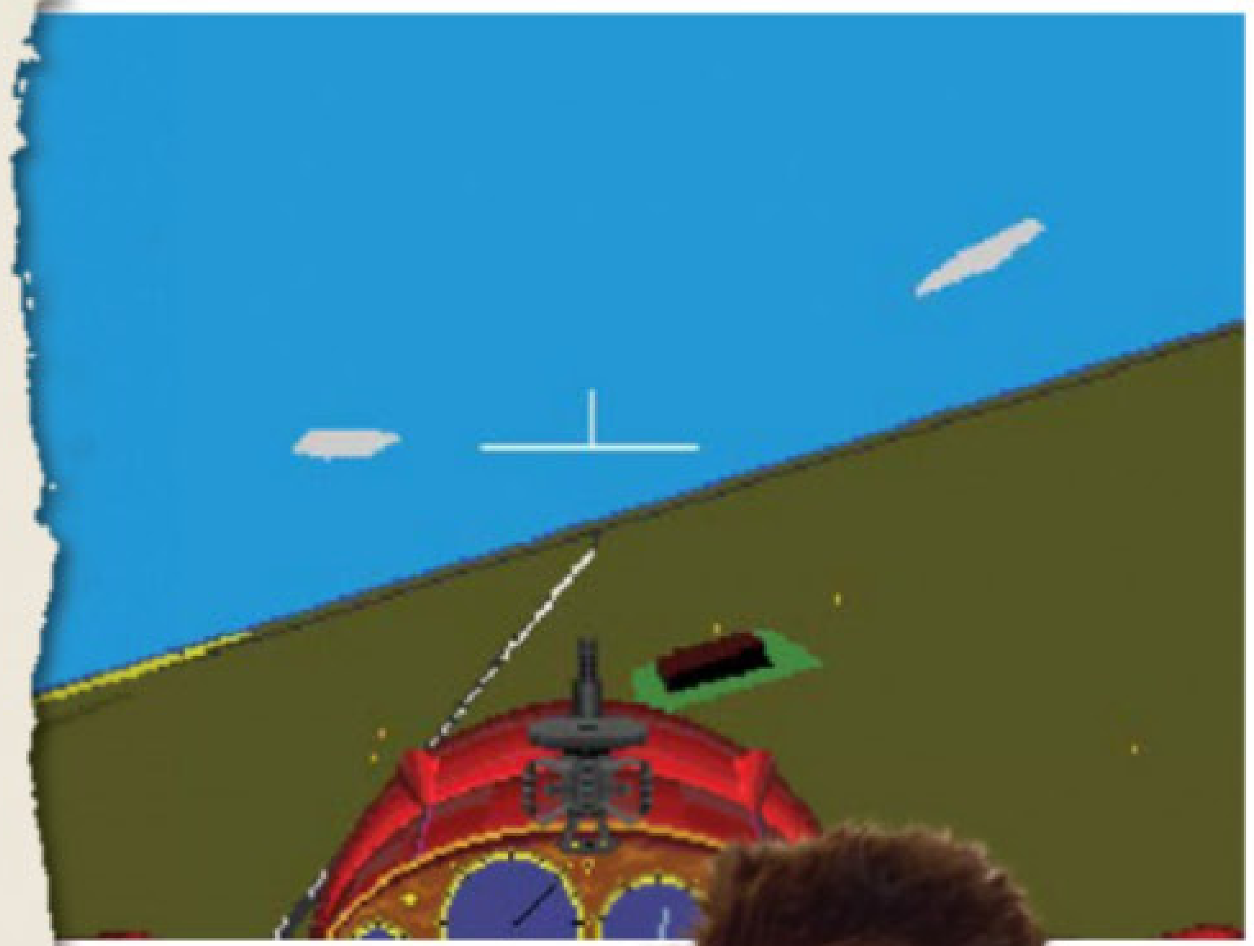
"I'll take responsibility for losing the plot," admits Andrew. "We didn't have a plan or any real direction. There were just two of us and we'd just go, 'ooh, that's a cool idea' and then forget it halfway through, leaving it unfinished… we kept getting bored and moving on to the next cool idea. I remember Tony was starting to lose faith. He brought someone up from Psygnosis who'd just done *WipEout* and showed them our demo of *Death Racer*. Ours really didn't look good in comparison. It was all a bit embarrassing…"

Death Racer was abruptly cancelled and with its demise, the relationship with Krisalis ended. Andrew and Tim were still essentially bedroom coders and simply couldn't compete with the large teams that typified game development in the PlayStation era. Fednet was disbanded but Andrew stayed in the industry, joining Eurocom in 1998 to work on quirky PlayStation title *40 Winks*. It was quite a change for Andrew to be tasked with implementing someone else's gameplay ideas, only to have them frustratingly changed when the project leader saw another company's latest release and decide that was the thing to do. "I absolutely hated it," grumbles Andrew. "You're at the receiving end of someone else's whim. What's marred my time in the games industry is that half your time is spent trying to get on with people rather than getting on with the job."

> "At the end of our first day selling Star Fighter, Tim and I had thousands in cash and were throwing it around our hotel room!"
> *Andrew recalls a very personal moneyshot*

» Andrew's first Archimedes, an A310, pictured here with Mark 'Fergie' Ferguson tapping in some data for the unreleased *Spitfire Fury*.



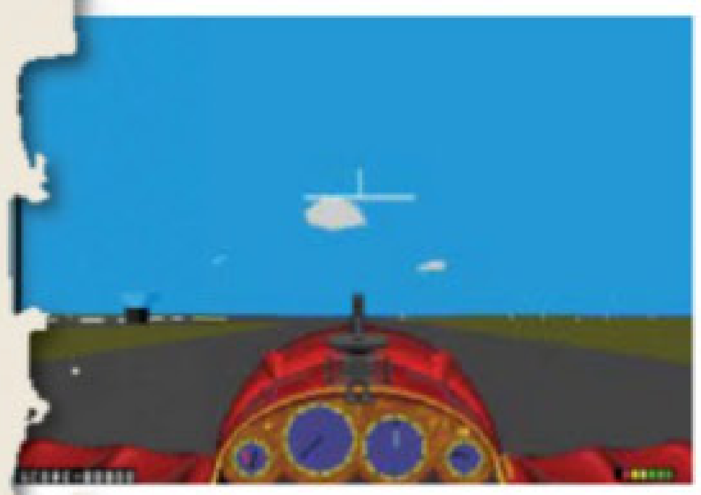


» [Archimedes] *Chocks Away* did well enough for Andrew to release an 'Extra Missions' pack.



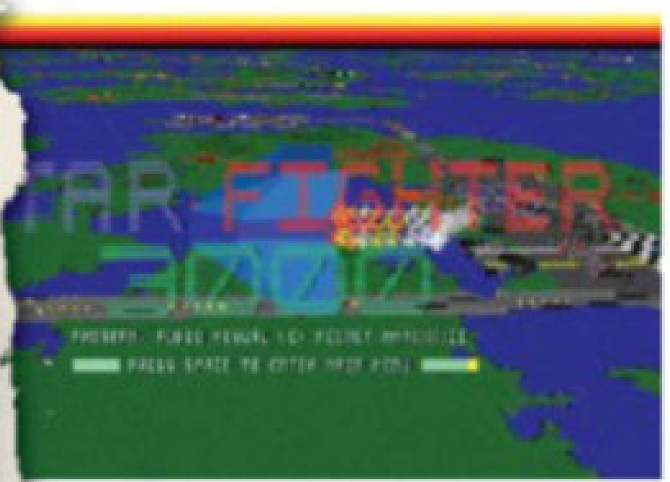
Hutchings on Hutchings

Andrew picks his three favourite projects



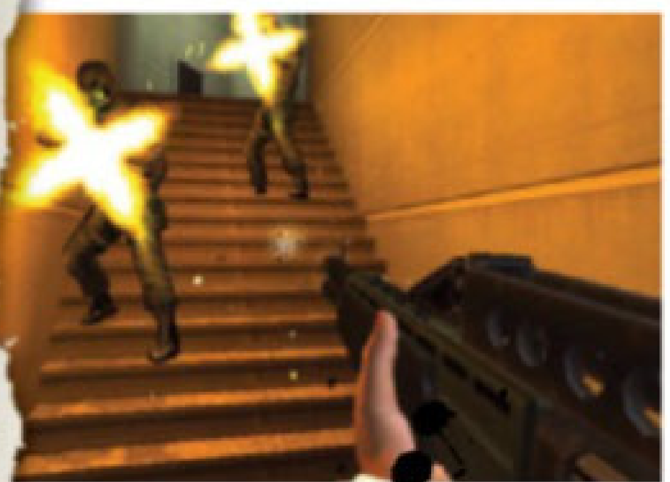
■ CHOCKS AWAY

My first game, written on my own at the start of my full-time programming career. With little experience, every development was a personal first and there was a great feeling of wonder upon discovering how to do things.



■ STAR FIGHTER 3000

The most profitable game I have ever made and the last one as an indie developer working with my business partner Tim Parry. Definitely the highpoint of my career. The hardest I have ever worked on anything and the most rewarding.



■ 007 NIGHTFIRE

My first game as an audio programmer working for Eurocom Developments. Won an award for best interactive music and use of surround sound in a game and I programmed all the audio systems. Good fun to develop with the audio team.

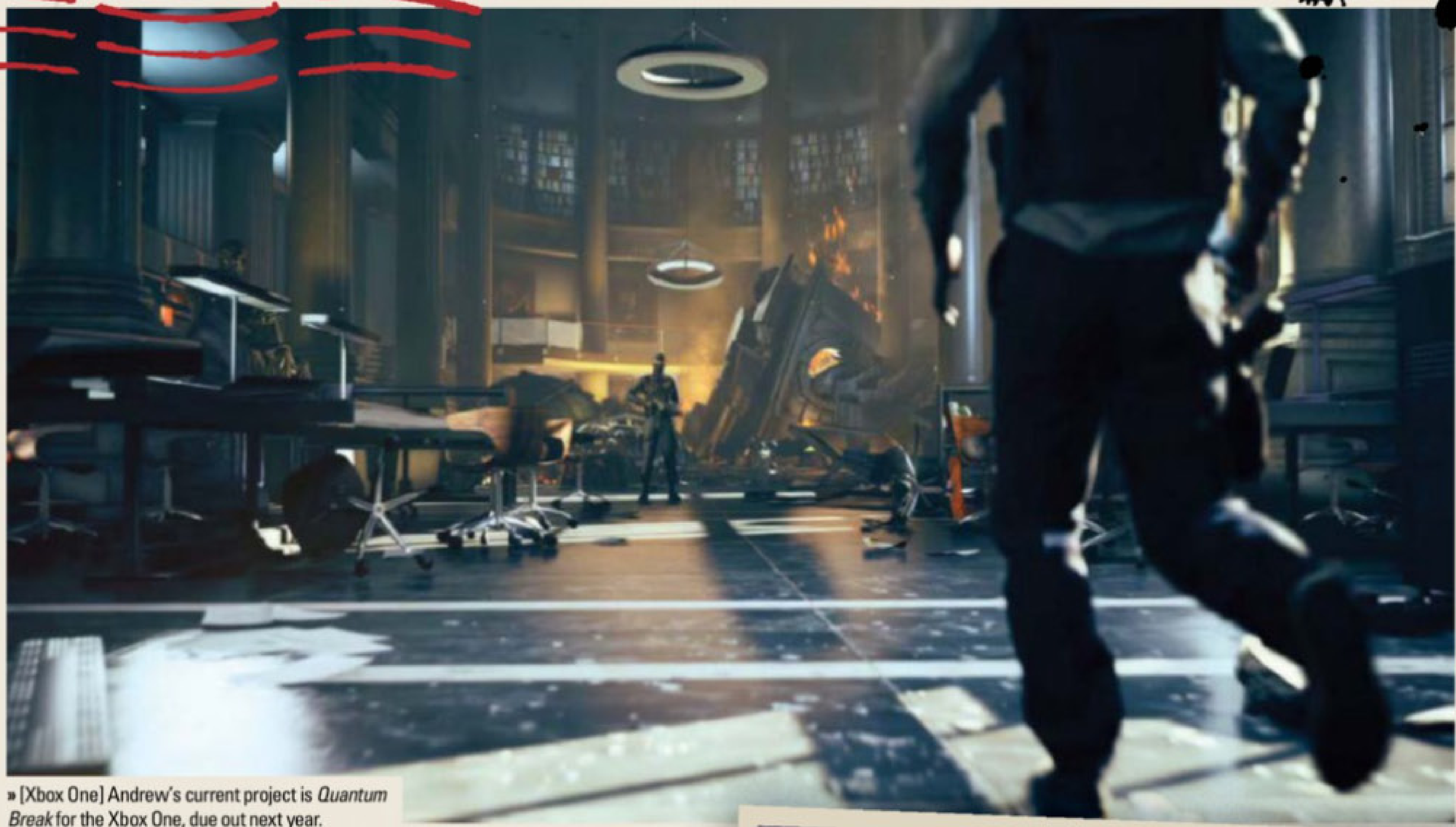
Readers' Questions

Merman: Do you feel the Archimedes was underrated as a games machine?
I suppose games weren't the focus of the machine. It was certainly powerful. Without really trying hard, you could easily outperform the Atari ST and Amiga. So yeah, it was underrated compared to them but I think it was just too expensive. If it had been cheaper, more people would've bought it and more games would've been made. I chose it because it was accessible and if I'd gone for the Atari or Amiga, I don't think I would've got anywhere near so far.

WoodyCG: I used to spend hours playing both *Stunt Racer 2000* and *Star Fighter 3000* on the old A3010. Were these games written in pure ARM assembler?
Good question! With *Stunt Racer 2000*, all of the rendering and game physics were done in pure assembler and possibly went into BASIC to do a few little things, like the menus. *Chocks Away* was less advanced. I think that went to BASIC every frame and did things like the high scores and any text in BASIC. There were two modules, mine and Tim's, and we wrote them pretty autonomously with an interface so they worked together.

RetroBob: I loved *Chocks Away*. Why did you decide to make that sort of game?
I've always liked 3D games. That's been a big driving force and a plane game is an obvious way to explore a 3D world. That's always fascinated me. Playing *GTA V* nowadays, the thing I like best is flying around and admiring the level of detail in the landscapes.

Merman: Do you mess around with the sound options when you play a game?
[Laughs] I suppose I should be more interested in that than I am! With a car game I can get a big bogged down, wondering how they did the car audio but I'm not working on a racing game at the moment so I tend to just enjoy them like everyone else. To be honest, I'm more interested in the graphics. I've only ended up doing audio because it's a niche I fell into. I'd love to be the super graphics guy but there are so many clever people that want to do that… it's far easier to hide away in the world of audio!

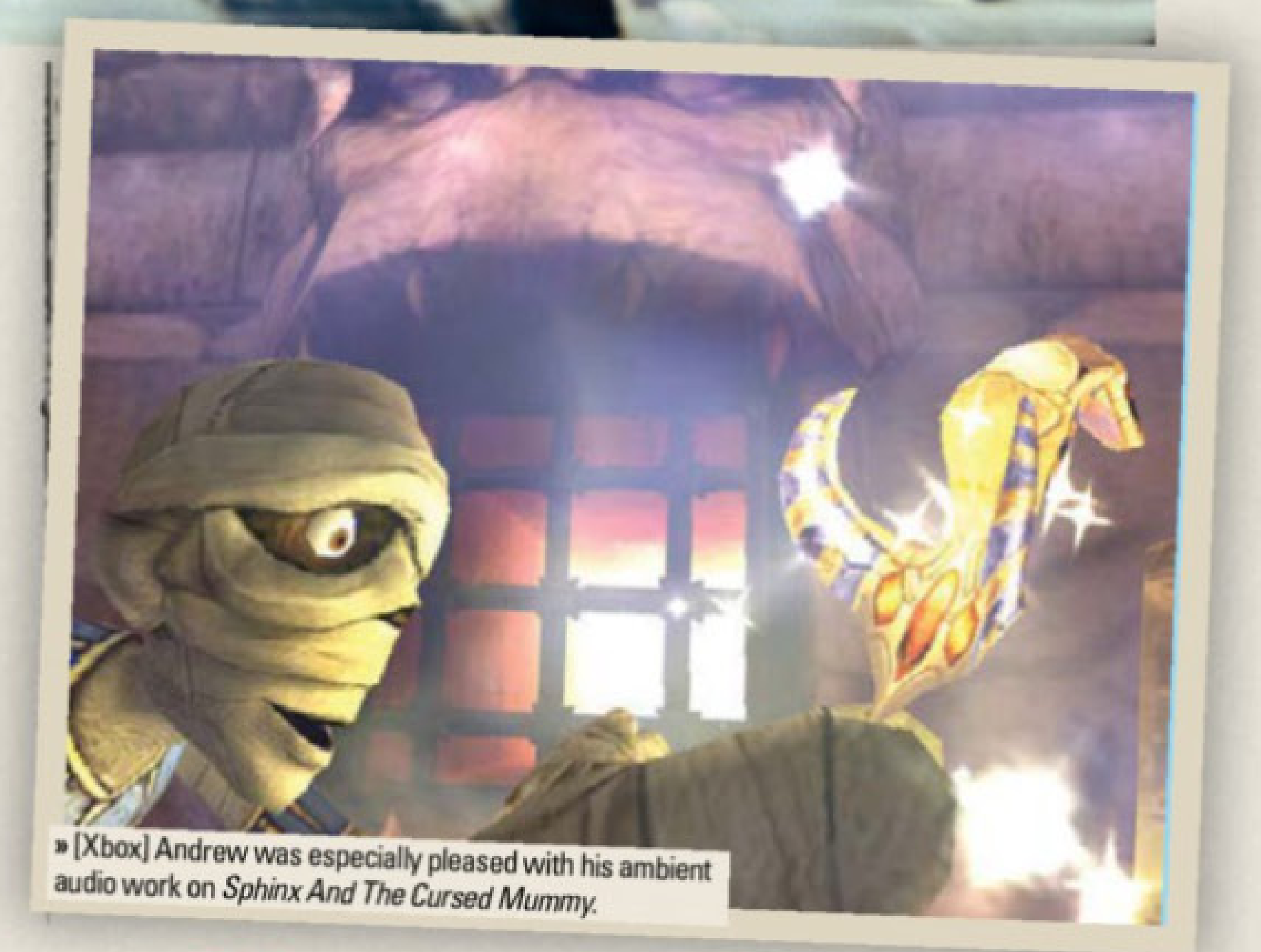


» [Xbox One] Andrew's current project is *Quantum Break* for the Xbox One, due out next year.

Though he enjoyed his second project at Eurocom, Disney's *Atlantis*, more, Andrew was still keen to get away from being the bloke left to implement an ever-changing plan handed down from above. He was thus drawn to audio programing, a far more planned and organised aspect of game development, which gave him a greater degree of certainty in his working environment and considerably more autonomy. He exceled in his new role, and his next project, *007 Nightfire*, was named as 'Best Interactive Music Score' by the Game Audio Network Guild in 2002, though it was perhaps a sign of how much appreciation he received for his work when his manager failed to mention the award and the first Andrew learned of it was when he spied the gong in reception.

"An interactive score works really well for a Bond game," says Andrew proudly. "Tense music when 007 is on a cliff ledge, then violins when the Bond girl walks in… it would transition seamlessly between different themes and phrases in a proper musical way. Most people don't bother now because it takes ages to compose but I really liked doing audio programming. It was quite separate from [other parts] of development and I didn't have to deal with any other egos… apart from my own!"

Andrew continued honing his audio skills on a string of titles including *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, *Batman* and *Predator* and is particularly proud of his work on *Sphinx And The Cursed Mummy*, one of Eurocom's attempts to create its own IP, which had some clever ambient sound effects. After leaving the Derby-based company in 2005, he moved to Birmingham to join Sega Driving Studio. Set up by ex-Codemasters staff, Andrew was part of the drive to reinvigorate the *Sega Rally* series but when *Sega Rally Revo* crashed and burned, he moved down South to Disney Interactive's Black Rock Studio in Brighton. "They wanted to create cool teenage games like *Split/Second*," notes Andrew, wearily. "They had a big budget and desperately wanted an audio programmer with racing game experience. Black Rock were fantastic and very keen to get me on board. They put me and my family up in the Grand Hotel and offered me more money. So we all relocated… and then a new chief executive came in and sacked everyone."



» [Xbox] Andrew was especially pleased with his ambient audio work on *Sphinx And The Cursed Mummy*.

Trivia

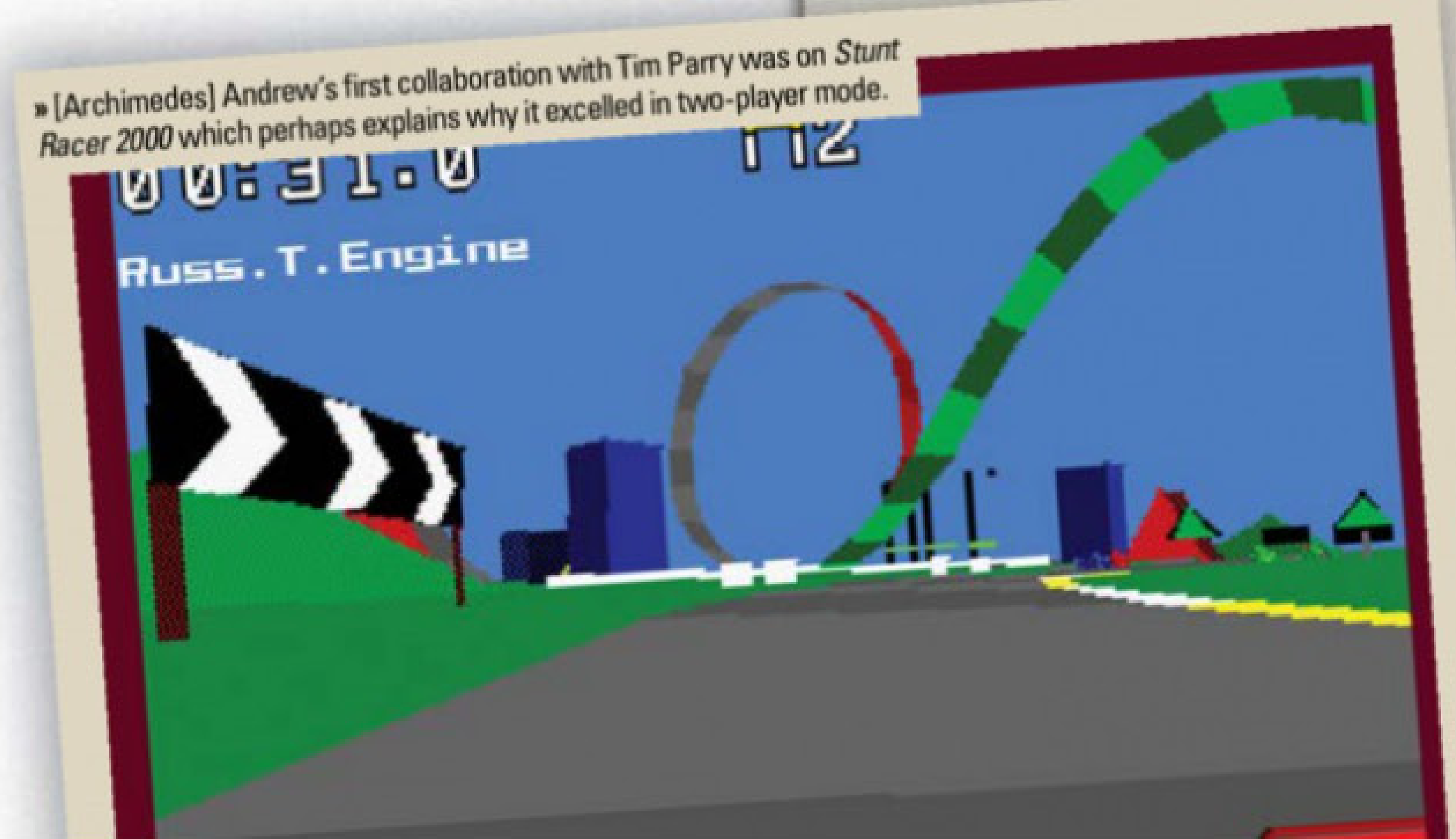
***Star Fighter 3000* was ported to consoles by Krisalis Software, previously known as Teque software, which was jointly founded by Peter 'Monty Mole' Harrap.**

It is perhaps understandable then, that Andrew has a somewhat circumspect about a career in the modern videogames industry. After the closure of Black Rock, he even tried his hand as an indie developer, revisiting his most successful creation for the Xbox 360. *Space Fighter 4000* ('Space' replacing 'Star' to avoid any awkward copyright infringement) allowed him to implement features that had never quite made it into the original game [see Boxout 'The Fight Goes On'] but Andrew is the first to admit he fell somewhat short of his ambitious vision. "I never really finished it," he acknowledges. "It was more a tech demo. The missions were just 'destroy everything'. You'll find it on Xbox Indie Arcade… if you look hard enough!"

The last few years have seen Andrew working on the audio for a diverse bunch of releases, including *Tony Hawk Shred Session* for iOS and Android devices and a number of Kinect *Sesame Street* titles, though sadly this hasn't required him to sample Cookie Monster on a biscuit binge. "I'll do whatever job pays more, within reason," he laughs. "I'm currently working on *Quantum Break* for Remedy and I had great fun working on iOS stuff for a smaller studio. Is it at all like my bedroom coding days? No, things are totally different now. That was the highlight of my career. Those days were the best. To be able to do your own thing and get paid for it was fantastic." Andrew Hutchings: an all-round sound bloke… ✱

Many thanks to Martyn and Kieren for their help with Archimedes screenshots.

» [Archimedes] Andrew's first collaboration with Tim Parry was on *Stunt Racer 2000* which perhaps explains why it excelled in two-player mode.



Andrew Hutchings Desert Island Disks

The games that Andrew Hutchings just couldn't live without and why he loves them





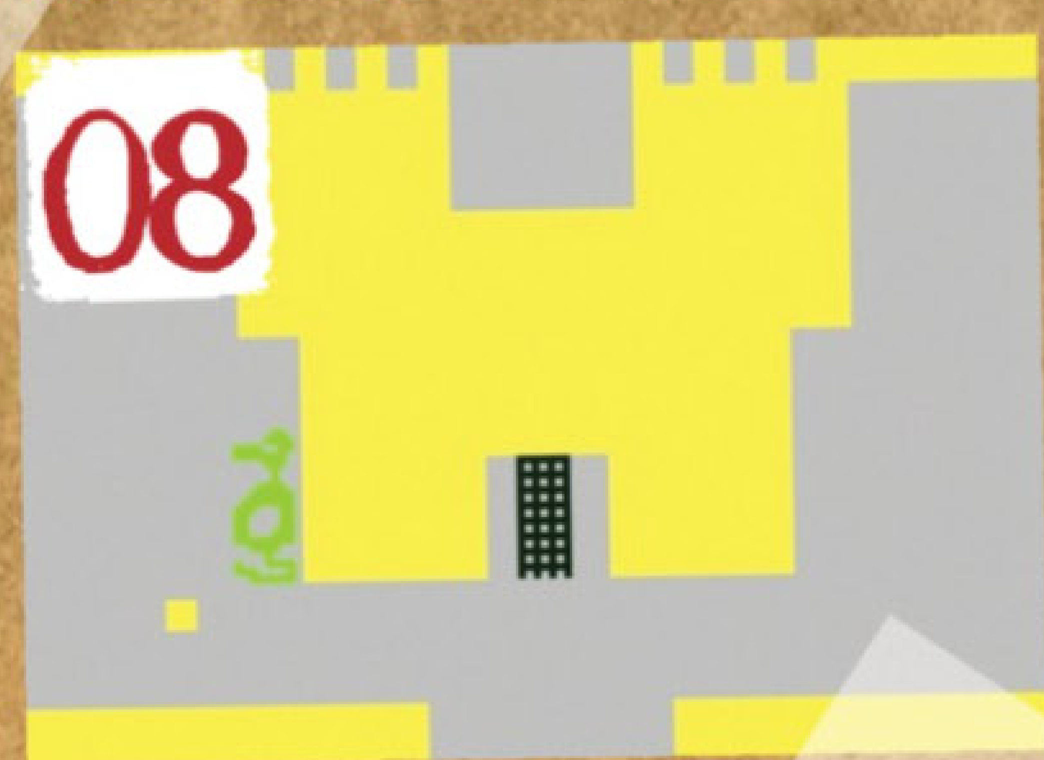












01 Red Dead Redemption
(XBOX 360)

My favourite game of all time. When I was working on *Split/Second*, there were a lot of late nights and 60-hour weeks so after it was finished, the boss gave us a long holiday. I bought this and it kind of became my career for a few months. It's such a brilliant story and there's so much world to explore. I really felt like I was a cowboy seeking revenge!

02 Grand Theft Auto V (XBOX 360)

Another Rockstar game. It was something I'd pre-ordered and looked forward to and I took a day off work when it was released. They tuned it to perfection. An amazing open world, fantastic storytelling and the technical achievement just wowed me.

03 Minecraft (XBOX 360)

It's the whole, "I wonder what happens if you do that…" Then you can do it and you find out! It's a bit of a pointless game and I always thought it looked rubbish. Finally my daughter convinced me to play it and you can have four-player split screen on the Xbox. It was amazing. Suddenly zombies were coming out at night, you had to find shelter, gather resources, build a hut… I really appreciate why people love it.

04 Far Cry 3 (XBOX 360)

Fantastic game. I've just finished it – my daughter saw it at a budget price in Tesco and bought it me as a present. I knew nothing about it before I began playing it. A great shooter and thoroughly good fun.

05 Burnout Paradise (XBOX 360)

The most fun car game I've ever played. It has that balance between ridiculous and silly but with a fast frame rate and great sounding audio. I started playing it to work out how they'd done the audio but ended up playing it to completion.

06 Elite (BBC MICRO)

The first proper 3D game on a home machine and it was a massive inspiration. Look at what they've done… how have they done it?! Certainly my early games were inspired by it.

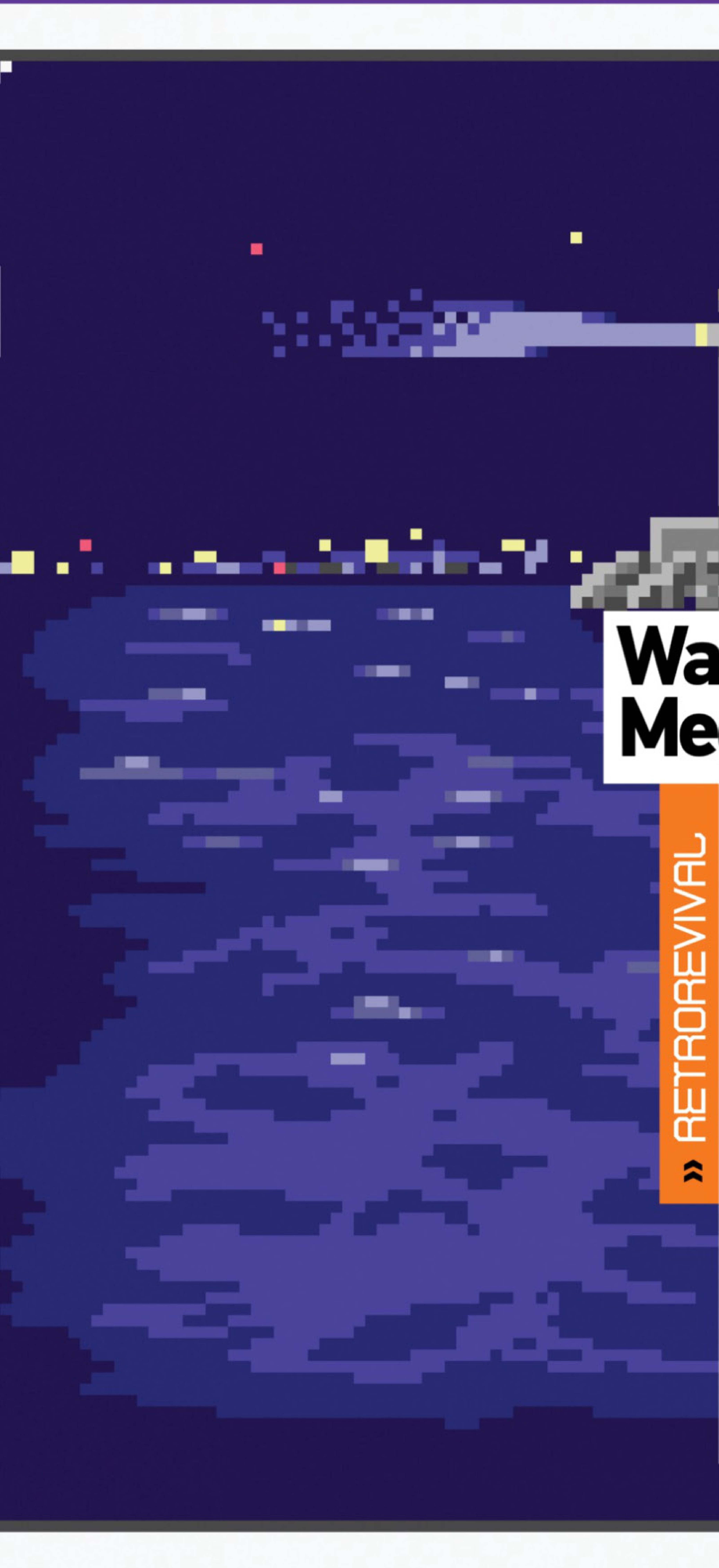
07 Hard Drivin' (ARCADE)

It really gave you that feel of taking a Ferrari round a racetrack. The force-feedback steering wheel and the solid polygon graphics were so far beyond what you could get on a machine at home. *Stunt Racer 2000* was definitely inspired by this.

08 Adventure (ATARI 2600)

Absolutely amazing. It was exploring an unknown world. You had to figure it out and wherever you went, there was something new. It was the first sandbox game, really. It looks very basic now but back then it was inspirational.





» RETROREVIVAL

WarioWare, Inc: Mega Microgames!

THE SILLIEST SELECTION OF GAMES YOU'LL EVER PLAY



» GBA » Nintendo R&D1 » 2003

Games based around mini-games are nothing new in the industry. You could argue that *Gorf* is one of the earliest examples, while titles like *Lazy Jones* and *Hypersports* are all built around similar concepts. Few mini-game-based efforts are as focused as *WarioWare, Inc* though.

Nintendo had already had some success in the area with the popular *Mario Party* series, but *WarioWare, Inc* takes the concept and runs with it, dispensing with the multiplayer aspect and creating a riot of silly games that will have you laughing as you play.

Shaking hands with border collies; cleaning someone's teeth until they sparkle; finding Mars and destroying it; sniffing dew drops back into a pretty girl's nose – nothing is too over-the-top or left field for Nintendo's game and its curve balls and utter oddness give it a surreal style that few other GBA games can match. The games themselves typically give you a few seconds in order to solve them and deliver extremely basic instructions, which can be quite disorientating, and only gets tougher as the game speeds up. Boss battles are included – being typically un-timed and quite substantial – while an entire section is devoted to classic NES and SNES games from Nintendo's back catalogue.

Throw in a selection of charmingly goofy characters, surreal cutscenes and the ability to constantly replay any mini-games you've already unlocked in the main story mode and *WarioWare, Inc* becomes an unmissable experience and an essential addition to anyone's GBA library. *



>> Although Christmas is just around the corner it's a surprisingly quiet month. Velocity 2X has impressed us, while we've also found time to sit down with the Sims 4



» [PS4] Flinging bombs at correctly numbered barriers will unlock new sections to travel to.

Velocity 2X

FUTURLAB'S SHOOTER IS BACK AND IT'S LEARNT SOME BRAND NEW TRICKS

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PS4
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PS VITA
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £12.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** FUTURLAB
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» The original *Velocity* was released in 2012 for Sony's PSP. It immediately stood out at the time thanks to its interesting gameplay mechanics that fused shooting with puzzle elements. *Velocity Ultra*, a hi-definition remake of the original game with additional elements, was released in 2013 for PS Vita and PlayStation 3.



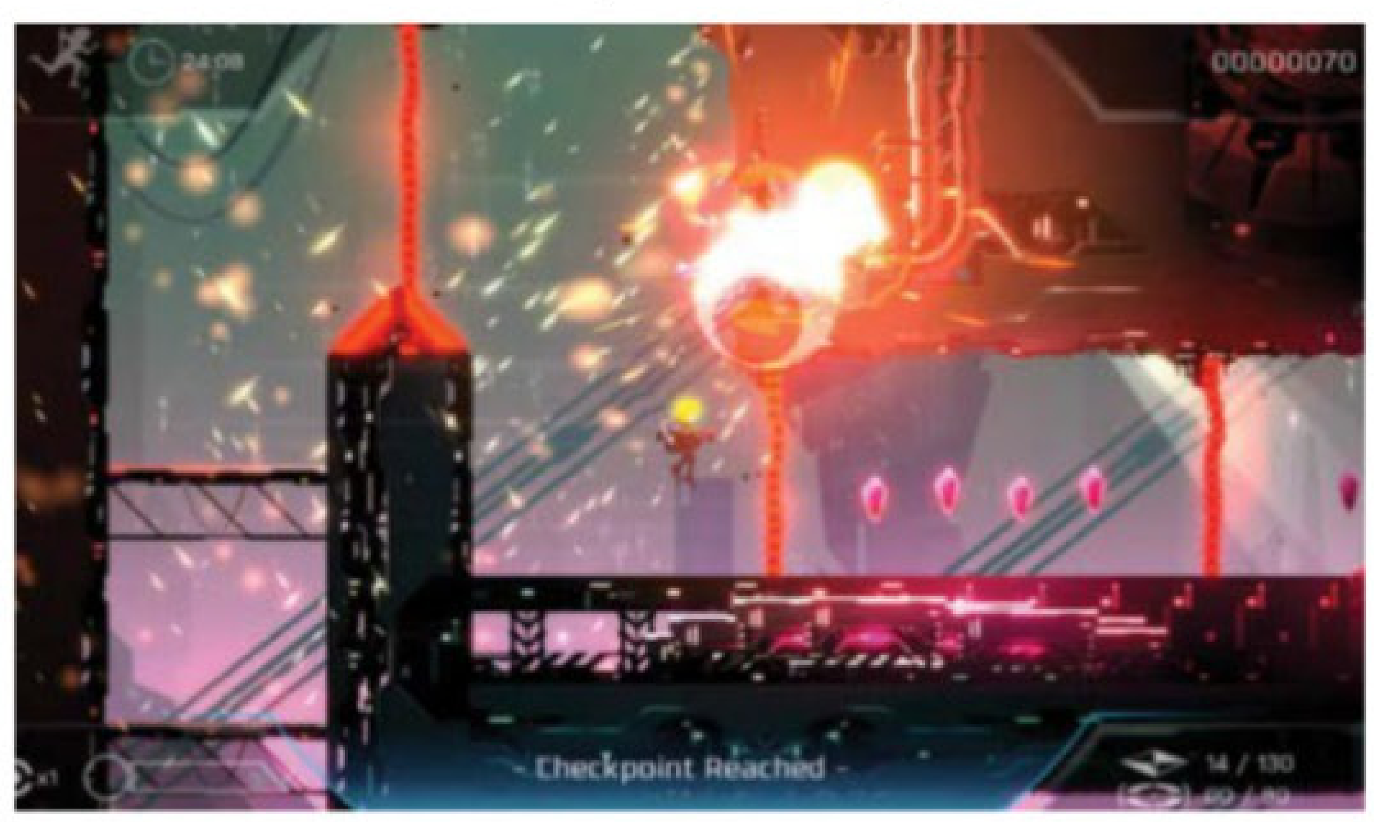
When *Velocity* first appeared on PSP, it injected fresh new life into the shoot-'em-up genre by adding an element of puzzling along with all its fast-paced blasting. FuturLab followed its PSP game up with a high-definition update for PS Vita owners last year and has now decided that the time is right for a sequel.

Mechanically, the shooting sections of *Velocity 2X* are largely similar to those found in the original game. You're once again in control of a Quarp Jet, which can handily teleport through space. Holding down the Square button brings up a cursor that can be moved with the left analogue stick. Once you've worked out where you want to teleport to, simply release the Square button to move there. It's a neat system allowing you to pass barriers and put yourself in better positions for shooting down incoming enemy waves.

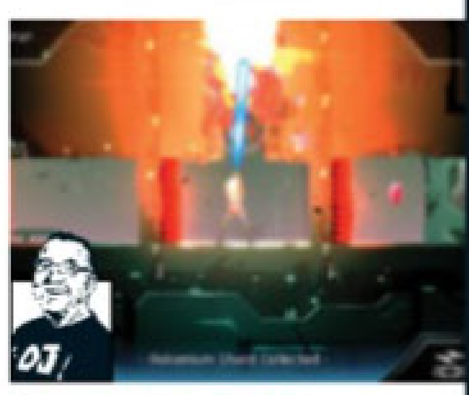
Your Quarp Jet is also equipped with the ability to fling bombs, which is controlled via the second analogue stick. This second ability is important, because some enemies will constantly appear behind you, or you'll need to break through otherwise impenetrable crystals to create new passageways for your ship to move down. Numbered barriers also come into play, meaning you'll need to shoot or bomb switches in a specific order to progress. Telepods also feature heavily in *Velocity 2X*, as they allow you to quickly transport back to previous areas of a stage – crucial as many of the levels feature multiple paths. In addition to all the above you're also trying to collect any on-screen crystals and complete the stage in as quick a time as possible.

Like the original game *Velocity 2X* initially feels like a juggling act as you try to get used to its flexible control system. Once you've sussed everything out and understand the level layouts the game changes completely, with you racing and teleporting through stages as quickly as possible in your bid to stay on top of the online leaderboards. *Velocity* was

» [PS4] The side-on sections work brilliantly well, mirroring the mechanics found in the shoot-'em-up sections.



* PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Velocity 2X
The shooting sections are as good as ever, but now there are excellent platform sections to enjoy.

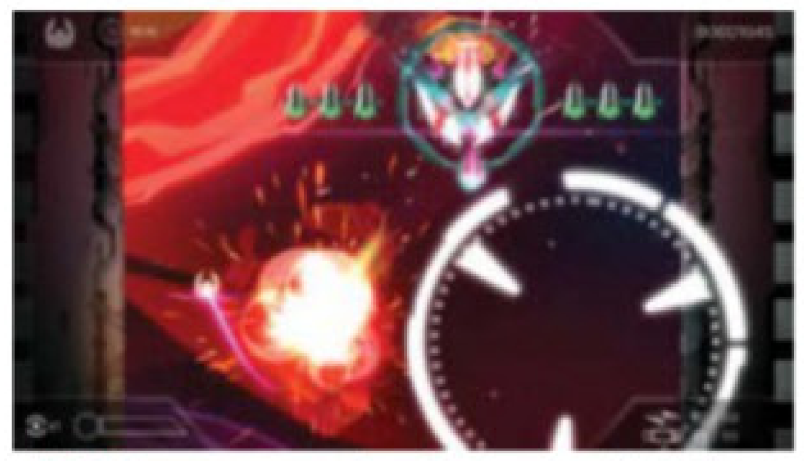


NICK
Velocity 2X
I don't have a PS4, but Cross-Buy still enables me to enjoy the excellent PS Vita version.





» [PS4] The comic book-style cutscenes are great, giving the shooter a surprising amount of depth.



» [PS4] There are a number of bosses found in both sections. You'll need to use all your abilities.



impossibly slick on PSP and PS Vita, and its sequel manages to improve on it greatly by adding far better designed levels and notably improved visuals.

FuturLab isn't finished however, as it's added an entire new section to its sequel, which turns a great game into a fantastic one. Unlike the original *Velocity*, Lt Kai Tana now has the ability to leave her spaceship, which introduces a whole new gameplay element to *Velocity 2X*, essentially turning it into a fast-paced platformer. Like the Quarp Jet, Kai Tana can warp through barriers, enhance her speed and even throw telepods (allowing greater transportation as levels get larger). She can also slide along the ground and use a high-powered blast to take out more troublesome barriers. While earlier stages are entirely side-on, later levels typically require you to play through both sections, as Kai Tana leaves the safety of her ship to activate otherwise unreachable switches.

What makes these sections so good is how well FuturLab has integrated its mechanics into a whole different genre. They work exactly the same, with the only difference being that firing is now done with the second analogue stick. They feel slightly more intuitive than the spaceship sections, and new weapons and abilities are carefully introduced across multiple stages so that you never feel overwhelmed. The platforming sections can get quite maze-like on later levels, becoming mini stages in themselves, but the clever stage design ensures that you're never at a loss as to where to go next.

Aesthetically it's up to FuturLab's usual high standards, with an abundance of slick animation and some interesting, if rather clean, art design. Comic strip style panels are used to elaborate on *Velocity 2X*'s surprisingly deep narrative, while the soundtrack is just as stylish as before with plenty of thumping tunes that entwine nicely with the fast-paced gameplay.

While the 50 levels will take a fair amount of time to complete – they become more labyrinthe on later stages – it's the superb ranking system that will have you constantly returning to FuturLab's game. Points are awarded for time, rescues and crystals. While the latter two are relatively easy to manage, it's the tight time limits that will take time to truly master. You'll stick with it though as the level design is so tight you know that it's your own clumsy decisions that are keeping you from your goal and not the controls of the game.

FuturLab has enhanced an already enjoyable shooter by bolting on a whole new raft of gameplay mechanics that work seamlessly with those in the original. It's an impressive fusion of genres and deserves to be experienced by everyone. ✱

In a nutshell

A great little game that blends hardcore shooting with addictive platform sections. Add in some clever puzzle elements and *Velocity 2X* has all the hallmarks of a classic.

>> Score **92%**



» [PS4] *Velocity 2X* is both Cross-Buy and Cross-Save, which makes it very handy for bus journeys.

✱WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
ALIEN STORM (MEGA DRIVE)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
CATHERINE (PLAYSTATION 3)



RETRO ROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download

PICK OF THE MONTH

Theatrhythm Final Fantasy: Curtain Call

» System: 3DS » Cost: £29.99 » Buy it from: Online, 3DS Shop, Retail

The original *Theatrhythm* was an entertaining rhythm-action game that arguably put fan service before the music. It's pleasing, then, that Square's sequel is a far more balanced game that proves you can have your cake and eat it too.

By far the most impressive aspect of *Theatrhythm: Curtain Call* is just how much has been crammed into it. As you tap, swipe and circle your way through the game you'll unlock over 200 songs, get to use 60 playable characters and discover a staggering array of goodies. It offers all the content from the original game along with the DLC, effectively making Square's original game obsolete. It also adds plenty of new tracks, plucked from a large number of games and spin-offs, including *Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns* and *Crystal Chronicles*. Granted there are repeated tunes, but the remixes are significant enough that you won't feel like the game is repeating itself.

Gameplay-wise it plays extremely similar to the first, so there are three distinct types of play: Battle Songs, where your time of four faces off against increasingly tougher opponents, Field Stages that see a single character travel and pick up items and Event Stages that feature classic FMV sequences from the song in question. There's also a brand new Versus Mode that enables you to face off against a human or AI opponent. The game is further expanded by the excellent Quest Medleys, which combine the separate game modes into epic dungeon crawls.

While the fan service is impeccable, it's the far more nuanced gameplay that really makes this an important addition to your library. The tunes feel far better balanced this time around, particularly on the harder difficulty levels, while use of items and equipment feels far more important to your party's success.

Add in the ability to permanantly enhance characters by collecting special cards and *Curtain Call* becomes one of those rare games that manages to step out of the shadow of its franchise to become a success in its own right.

86%

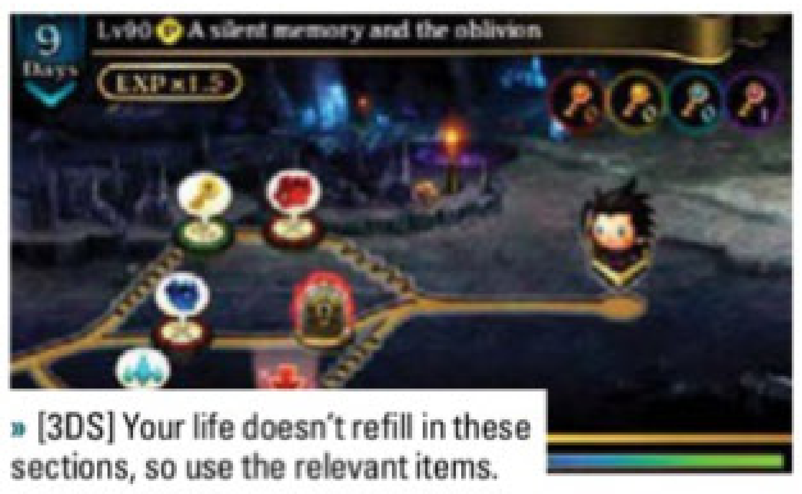


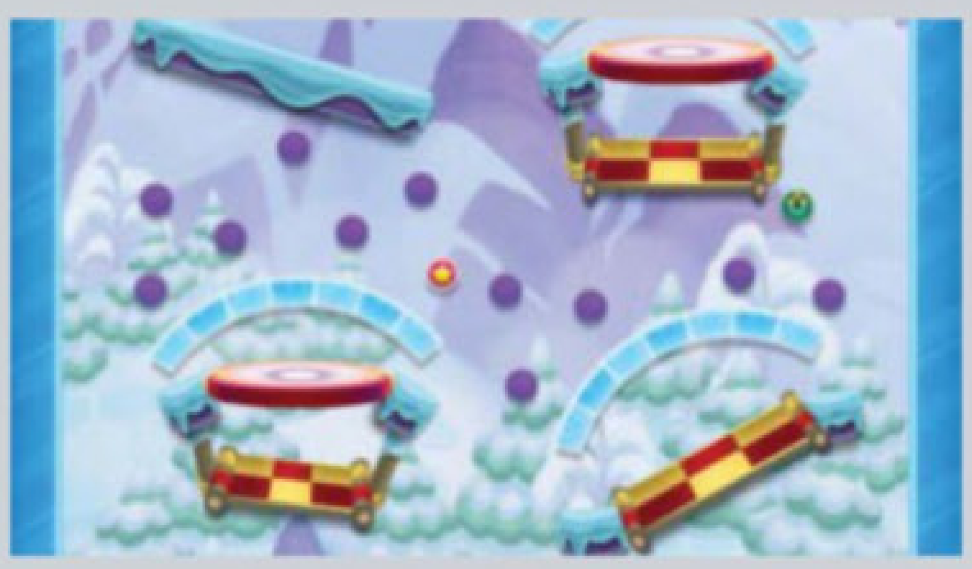
» [3DS] Event Stages feature popular animated sequences from past games.



» [3DS] Follow the trail with your stylus in order to get the best possible score.


» [3DS] Battle Songs can get extremely frantic and often sound incredible.


» [3DS] Your life doesn't refill in these sections, so use the relevant items.



Super Monkey Ball Bounce

» **System:** iOS (tested), Android
» **Buy it for:** Free (in-app purchases)
» **Buy it from:** App Store, Google Play

Shut your eyes and imagine *Peggle*. Got that? Now shut your eyes and imagine *Super Monkey Ball* characters in it, less elegant stage design and a reliance on in-app purchases. Open your eyes… You're playing Sega's new game.

While we're never impressed with IAP it's handled better here than it was in *Sonic Jump Fever 2*. There's more chance to explore before you're asked for payments, while the refill times are nowhere near as severe. It's a pity, then, that the stage design feels far weaker than *Peggle*'s. While the addition of puzzle stages are intriguing, the loss of a safety net on certain stages just makes the game feel greedy.

49%



Hyrule Warriors

» **System:** Wii U
» **Buy it for:** £39.99
» **Buy it from:** Online, WiiShop, Retail

Mixing *Zelda* with the *Dynasty Warriors* series might seem an odd choice but it's one that works well. Effectively a scrolling beat-'em-up, *Hyrule Warriors* retells the legend of Zelda via smart cutscenes and slick combat. The 13 available characters are distinct, with a range of crazy moves that splice extremely well with all the fan service.

You'll have the most fun in Legend Mode, an 18-stage adventure that cartwheels through Hyrule's most memorable locations and bosses, but there's additional meat in the form of Adventure Mode, which features a slick NES map and 128 challenges. It's clearly aimed at *Zelda* fans and is an evolution of the scrolling fighters of old, but its fun gameplay should be enough to convince you to give it a punt.

78%



The Sims 4

» **System:** PC
» **Buy it for:** £49.99
» **Buy it from:** Online, Origin, Retail

There's a horrible feeling of déjà vu upon starting up *The Sims 4*. Get past the rather impressive character creation (it's never been easier to create a surprisingly detailed sim) and you'll have a nagging feeling that you've seen it all before. Granted the addition of multitasking is extremely welcome and the new emotion system genuinely gets the whole package that little bit closer to having actual people living in your computer, but other aspects just fall a little flat.

The Sims 4 is not a bad game, far from it – it's just that we've seen it all before. It's also frustrating to have excellent components from past expansions ripped out so the cycle can begin again. *The Sims 4* remains a good timewaster, but it does suffer from over-familiarity.

70%

Welcome to Homebrew



J.K

>> We don't see much in the way of new 8- or 16-bit sports games; granted there's been a couple of single sport titles recently but I can't remember seeing anything for London 2012 or indeed any other Olympic event which wasn't meant to be viewed as a joke. Where are the Epyx style multi-event games or are we too decrepit to waggle a joystick now?

» [C64] Make it into overtime.



ARE YOU GAME?

The third GB Jam is on its way!

The fifth instalment of the Your Game competition has recently finished, with eight complete games and two previews being released over a range of genres at the DiHalt demo party held in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia. Another issue and another game jam. This time it's the third GB Jam where an impressive 248 games were entered that tried to simulate a classic Game Boy on current generation systems with varying degrees of success. The winner was Daniel Linssen's dungeon crawler *Roguelight* – which we'll hopefully take a proper look at soon – but there was also blasting, puzzles and platforming action to choose from and some titles that would make an excellent Game Boy game if anyone were to convert them.

Although we haven't had a chance to work through all of the games released there were a few that grabbed our attention. Run-and-gun fans might want to try the web-based *Cryoborg* which offers up some simple but satisfying *Contra*-style blasting, *GrayScale* has a challenging combination of top view action and puzzling, there is some simple but surprisingly addictive horizontally scrolling action from *F-Road* and then there is the amusingly titled *Surfing Moai*, a tough puzzle-platformer about one of the stone heads from Easter Island who dreams of being a surfer. We even played a scrolling shooter with a message about the faceless nature of drone-based warfare; *Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind* hands the player control of a drone that can be used to call in air strikes over an assortment of 'generic Middle Eastern landscapes'.

Of course, some of those 200-plus entries take some liberties with colour or sound, one or two need a recent computer or a specific browser plug-in to run and some are probably not going to be much fun to play, but they're all available to enjoy behind Kikstart.eu/gbjam-3 along with a helping of irony from downloading a multi-megabyte archive onto a powerful computer to simulate a Game Boy!

> "Run-and-gun fans might want to try the web-based Cryoborg"

Incoming

More goodies on the way. We quite like the look of Bob Smith's X=Y=Z and Game About Squares

KIKSTART.EU/XYZ-SPEC



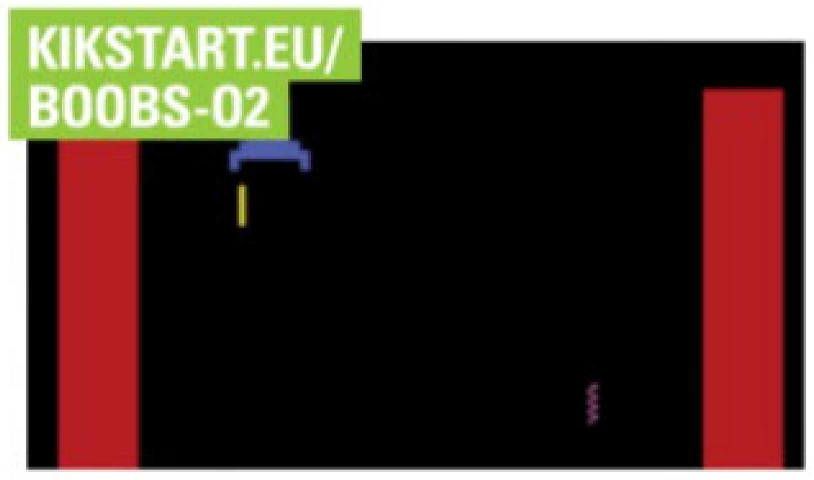
▲ Just released by Bob Smith is a new isometric puzzler *X=Y=Z*, a follow up to his previous title *W*H*B*.

▼ *Game About Squares* is a converted web-based puzzler about guiding squares to coloured spots.



KIKSTART.EU/SQUARES-SPEC

KIKSTART.EU/BOOBS-02



▲ Boobs the alien has to defend his planet from Earthlings, mostly attracted to the area by his name!

DRINK YOUR MILK

Set in the old west and sporting some interesting *Wolfenstein 3D*-style visuals, *Lawless Legends* is, according to the developers, going to be an *Ultima*-style RPG which currently has an Apple II version driving the horses while the C64 rides shotgun.

Kikstart.eu/lawless-prv-a2 for a forum thread which has a preview released at Kansasfest 2014 and more details about the game, but it's worth noting that there's no release date at the time of writing so would-be cowpokes may want to dig out their Stetsons and practice a John Wayne swagger in the meantime.

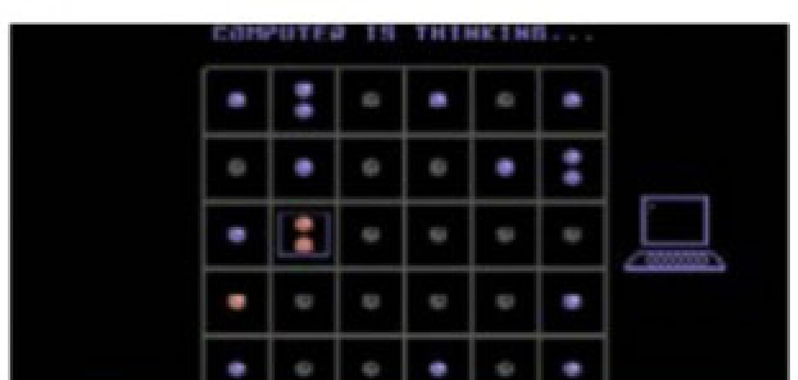

» [Apple II] Moseying on down.


» [C64] Make it into overtime.

SPACE KABOOM

Coming very soon for the C64 is two-on-two basketball game *Jam It* which has been in development for a couple of years. So far we've seen a couple of videos which show some of the gameplay on its official website at Kikstart.eu/throwback and were reminded of the Electronic Arts' *One On One*. We're looking forward to getting hold of the game itself to shoot some hoops and see how it plays when the final version is complete. *Jam It* will be available to buy on real media or as a download from Psytronik and RGCD in the near future.

▼ *Nuclear Reaction* has recently been released with issue 79 of the online magazine *Commodore Free*.



KIKSTART.EU/NUC-REACTION-C64

Homebrew heroes



Amstrad PCW programmer Miguel García – whose blog is cpm-connections.blogspot.com.es – was behind the gallery shooter UMMO, so we got in touch to find out more about what that took to make and the platform it runs on

New Amstrad PCW games are pretty rare, what drew you to the machine?
Well, it was my first computer. In fact, it *is* my first computer, because I still have it with me. Thanks to the PCW I discovered a powerful operating system: CP/M Plus from Digital Research. With the PCW, I learnt a lot of programming: BASIC, C, 8080 & Z80 assemblers and Logo. And of course, it was the perfect machine for my studies with the help of LocoScript, SuperCalc II, etc. The Amstrad PCW is a very powerful machine.

How long did *UMMO* take to write from start to finish?
I have been working on *UMMO* from August 2013 up to August 2014, but the main work was done in around two months.

Were there any high or low points during development?
Yes. The main work was done in August and September 2013, according to my notes in the source code. I was writing code and designing the bitmaps (nice job).

At the same time, I was writing The World Of, a game engine for MESCC (my own version of Small C) inspired by Greenfoot. It runs inside of *UMMO* – lots of fun.

Then, as I usually do when a program is nearly finished, my brain starts thinking about other projects. It took me around a year to come back to *UMMO*, improve some things, write the documentation and publish it on my website.

And have you received any feedback from PCW gamers?
Yes, all new PCW programs are always welcome, because there is not too much movement at the software side. It seems that PCW users like the graphics, but some of them complained about the game difficulty. This is due mainly to the high speed of the game, and I did a new version which is not so fast. Another reported issue is the keyboard response, but I have decided to leave it the way it is.

Do you have any future plans for new games?
Yes. In fact, I have another PCW game nearly finished called *Roswell*. I've been working on it since September 2012, but I have to improve the game speed and design some new levels. Maybe some day… I am also working in a game for CP/M called *Connections*, a sort of 'plumber game'.

And I am currently writing a 'to do list' manager for CP/M called What To Do, based on… oh, sorry, that isn't a game!

Have you got any advice for programmers who might want to try the Amstrad PCW?
Yes: What are you waiting for?! Seriously speaking, the Amstrad PCW is a very powerful machine, with a lot of possibilities at the software level. It has a screen with high resolution, lots of memory, disc drives and a nice Z80 CPU. It has CP/M, a very powerful operating system that enables it to run a high variety of programming languages: BASIC, C, Pascal, Logo, assembler…



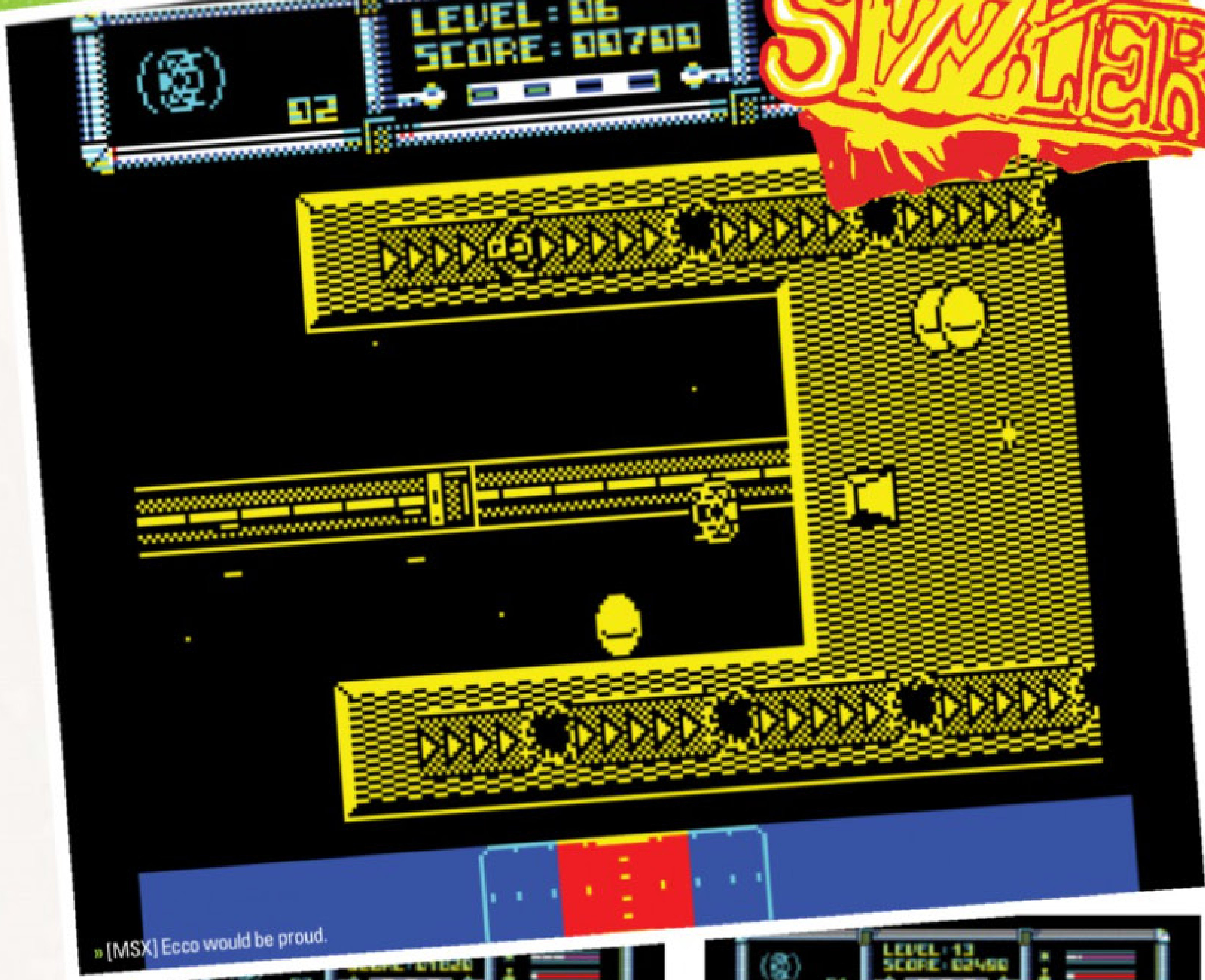
» [Amstrad PCW] It wasn't a happy bunny.



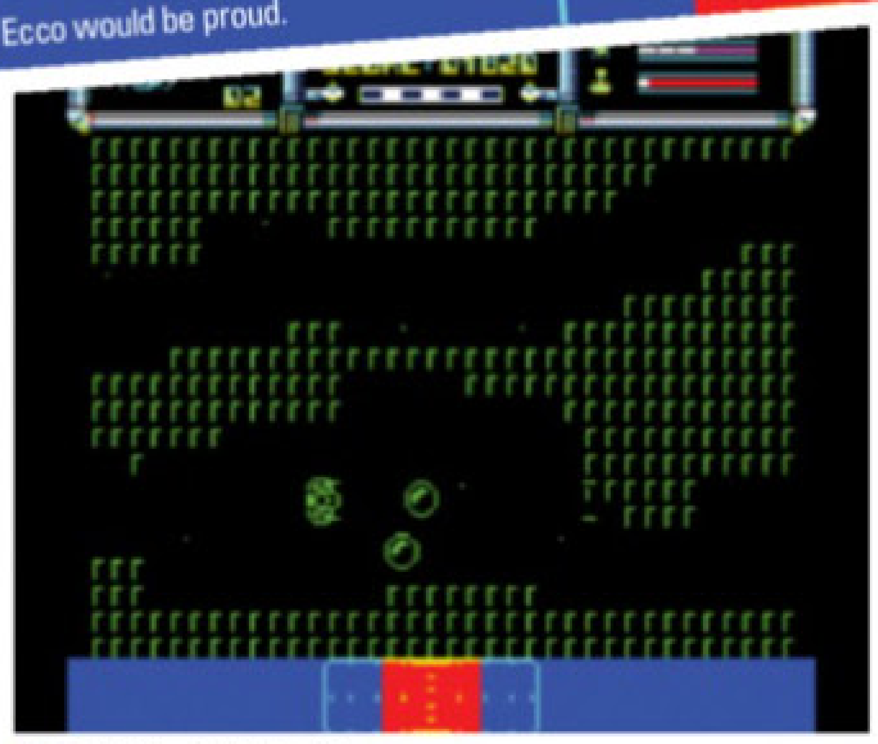


» [Amstrad PCW] Building a green universe.

Even more
Homebrew REVIEWS



» [MSX] Ecco would be proud.


» [Oric] Enter the labyrinth.



» [Oric] Grab that Game Boy!

Retro Gamer Sizzler

ORICIUM

» **FORMAT:** ORIC » **DEVELOPER:** DEFENCE FORCE
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/ORICIUM-ORIC » **PRICE:** FREE

A civilisation from an alternative dimension has been patiently watching the Earth, learning about it and working on an invasion plan for the moment when the walls between realities became weak enough to break through with a fleet of huge battleships. Although these vast craft are immune to attack from the armada sent out against them, Earth's scientists scanning for weaknesses find a fatal flaw; a lone pilot with a tiny but maneouvrable skimmer could potentially get through to the deck of each dreadnought and disable the shields, allowing humankind to send it back across the dimension boundary.

The player takes control of this small craft as it flies over the bi-directional scrolling landscape of the dreadnought, taking on the airborne drones that are there as a defence force. Contact with enemies will drain the skimmer's shields but there are energy cells on the deck to charge them back up and, when a few of the nasties are destroyed, they leave behind helpful items. But the primary objective is to actually defeat the dreadnought itself so that it can be blasted into its own reality, and in order to do that the player will need to activate the four LEDs on their status panel which can be manipulated by flying over switches. To complicate matters each switch may have an effect on more than one LED, so it isn't a simple case of finding and triggering the four switches and some trial and error testing is required.

This twist and the player craft being protected for a few collisions by the shields before exploding does make this game feel different to its muse *Uridium*, and deviating from that battle-tested formula actually works for a change. The puzzle-like switches make *Oricium* a slightly slower-paced and more thoughtful game so, since merely wading in won't get a beginner too far into their mission, the programmer has included a handy training mode which pauses the game to introduce each element as the player encounters it.
Overall this is a nicely thought-out game that Oric-owning shoot-'em-up fans should find extremely enjoyable.

91%

Make this

Every month our very own Jason Kelk will be teaching you handy new programming techniques. This month: mixing colours

NEW

1 Most 8-bit systems have a limited number of colours, but there are ways to mix them together. Take *Stamp Quest* on the Spectrum, we can look more closely at it with an emulator to see that it alternates red and yellow pixels to produce a shade of orange.





2 Some machines can similarly place two colours on adjacent raster lines to make them 'merge' into a shade not in the regular palette; *Mayhem In Monsterland* on the C64 does this and, again, we can unmask the coloured lines with the emulator.

3 Oric coders have their own variation on this theme with games like *Stormlord* looking colourful without the problems with pushing colour into the display – look at more at those graphics and it becomes easier to see what has been done.





4 And the Atari 8-bit can do numerous things with PAL blending as well, as seen in *Assembloids* XE which combines a 4:1 pixels for colour and a 1:1 ratio mode for the graphics. Again, a closer look makes what is going on more clear.

TEMPLE OF TERROR

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE PLUS/4 » **DEVELOPER:** CSABO
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/TEMPLE-TERROR-264 » **PRICE:** FREE

The evil Malbordus is searching for five dragon carvings with incredible mystical powers which have been split up and concealed within the lost city of Vatos for centuries and only one person, selected by the wizard Yaztromo and given a book of helpful spells, can get to them first to thwart his dastardly plans.

The original *Temple Of Terror* was based on a game book by Steve Jackson and Ian Livinstone. It was released on a range of 8-bits during the Eighties and this new Plus/4 version is ported from the C64. It isn't identical however; several bugs have been fixed including one that prevented the game from being completed.

Defeating Malbordus isn't easy since some of the puzzles are a little obscure and there are quite a few instant death situations, but the parser includes the command, BOM, which can be used to step back one move.

77%



» [Plus/4] Do you take credit cards?

UMMO

» **FORMAT:** AMSTRAD PCW » **DEVELOPER:** FLOPPY SOFTWARE
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/UMMO-PCW » **PRICE:** FREE

We travel back in time and space to Spain on 1 June 1967 to find the airspace above Madrid occupied by a craft hailing from the planet UMMO; its intentions are obviously hostile since anything that gets too close is blown to smithereens, but a prototype fighter craft stands a chance of wading through the defences and saving humanity… if someone is brave enough to fly it.

But there is a slight complication; the ship's primary weapon has fairly limited ammunition so there's an urgent need to be quite economical while you're firing, both to keep the weapon operational – going into a boss battle with almost no ammo would be close to suicidal – and to avoid blasting the specific power-up that contains more bullets. This gameplay twist makes *UMMO* a more thoughtful game than it might appear from the screenshots, but it does still need some really quick reflexes as well.

81%



» [Amstrad PCW] A personal best.

DEATH RACE

» **FORMAT:** ODYSSEY 2 » **DEVELOPER:** LS DRACON » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/DEATH-RACE-O2 » **PRICE:** FREE

If you've ever fancied driving around at speed and squashing 'gremlins' with your car then *Death Race* may be just the game for you! Of course there is more to it than just making blood spatter patterns on the tarmac; players can compete against the clock and – if there are two of you – each other for the best score. The playfield starts off with just two cars and two pedestrians in their safety zones at the sides, but when a gremlin is flattened it'll also leave behind an irritating, car-impeding gravestone to avoid.



» [Odyssey 2] The GPO owned it before.

Death Race was originally designed as a fast-paced arcade experience by Exidy in the mid-Seventies and the developer of this conversion has done a really good job of replicating that look and feel on the Odyssey 2. It can be played by a single player against the clock for a score and will still be fun, but definitely works best as a two-player experience.

79%

ZOMBI TERROR

» **FORMAT:** ZX SPECTRUM » **DEV:** KABUTO FACTORY » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/ZOMBI-TERROR-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

Waking up alone on a zombie-infested island with just a baseball bat and a lousy headache really isn't a great way to begin the day and, since the living dead have already spread to the mainland, things appear to be on a downward spiral.

Zombi Terror is a graphical adventure with a turn-based combat system for when the player encounters something nasty and, although killing zombies with a bat isn't easy to the point where losing some health while escaping will initially seem preferable, there are weapons to find which can cause more damage and medical kits to restore any lost stamina.



» [ZX Spectrum] A grave situation.

The randomness of the combat system means that surviving the zombie apocalypse will take a little luck as well as judgement, but *Zombi Terror* still works well as a game.

71%

MAILBAG



HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

STAR LETTER

SPIDER STUMPER

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
I love your magazine. Since I first started reading it in 2009 I've never missed an issue, and everyone I've introduced the magazine to has also loved it and become loyal followers.

I'm writing to ask for your help. I remember playing a horizontally scrolling arcade space shooter as a kid back in the mid-Eighties in a local pub. The game had a space ship with four large missiles mounted on the sides which you could fire, as well as the usual laser gun. You flew over the typical mountain background and the main enemies were large spiders that span web lines across the screen which you had to shoot your way through. Can anyone please tell me what this game was called? I've tried looking on the internet and sifting through ROMs but I can't find it and I'd love to play it again. Any ideas?

Any chance of articles covering retro magazines in depth for a particular system say for example, the Spectrum and the rise and fall of *Your Sinclair*, *Sinclair User* and *Crash* etc?

Jim MacLeod

You've stumped us, Jim! We spent a good while looking for a game that fit your description, but the closest one we found was Namco's vertically scrolling game *Dangerous Seed*. It's not often that we're caught out on such things, so in lieu of us helping you find an old favourite, have a prize.

As for magazine-related features, we've done features on titles such as *Crash, C&VG* and *Sega Saturn Magazine* in the past, but never one covering all the material over a specific system's lifetime. It might be interesting – are there any other readers out there that would like to see this sort of feature?



» [Arcade] It's definitely got spiders and webs, but *Dangerous Seed* scrolls vertically so that's out…

» [Arcade] Someone must have beaten RoadBlasters and claimed a t-shirt from Atari, surely?



ROUGH ROAD

Hi,
Firstly I wanted to thank you for your article on the brilliant *RoadBlasters* game, a fondly remembered game from my youth.

I did, however, notice that you omitted one piece of information, and this was on the t-shirt giveaway. It depended on this insanely difficult game to be completed for a code to be generated which could then be sent off in exchange for the t-shirt (something I never saw achieved).

It would be really interesting to know whether any of your readers ever managed this accolade and actually has the t-shirt. I'm imagining it would be worth a sweet fortune!

James Fish

It's funny you should bring that up, James – we'd actually got a short bit in about the t-shirt offer, but space issues caused it to be cut. We don't know anyone that managed to get the code and the t-shirt, though. In fact, if you look around online you can find images of the original posters referencing the giveaway, but we couldn't see the actual item of clothing. So, readers, if you've got one of the original Atari *RoadBlasters* t-shirts, we'd love to actually see what they looked like!

SEEKING SONY

Hi **RG**!
First of all, thank you from Spain for your wonderful mag!

I'm researching about the first PlayStation console's history, and I'd like to know in which issues of your mag I could get some info about it.

Could you tell me that? Many thanks!

Ricardo Martinez Cantudo

Many thanks, Ricardo. We ran a Retroinspection on the PlayStation in issue 71, and with the system's 20th anniversary just around the corner we're planning to revisit the console very soon…

» We love celebrating anniversaries at **Retro Gamer**, and this unassuming slab of plastic has a big one coming up…



» [Game Gear] We've never covered the *Chessmaster* series before – is it something you all want to see?



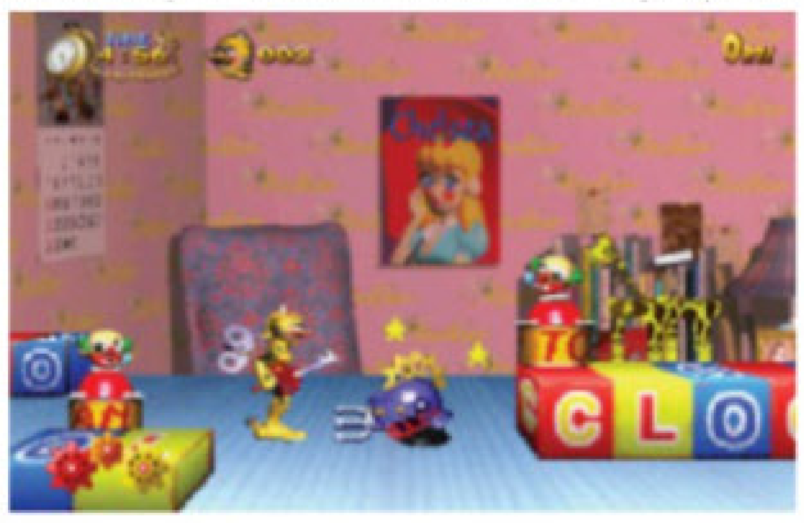
BY HOOK OR BY ROOK

Hi **RG,**
I'm currently doing some research into the *Chessmaster* series and I was wondering if **Retro Gamer** had covered the *Chessmaster* franchise in any previous issue?

Vitas Varnas

We're quite familiar with the series, but we haven't ever covered it at all. Would any other readers be interested in reading a feature about this series?

» [Saturn] Pepperachou doesn't seem to get as much love as other Sega characters – even Ristar has a higher profile.



PEPPERACHOU! (GESUNDHEIT!)

Hello,
I am a fan of your magazine, you do a great job. Could you tell me if you have any issues of your magazine with some articles about the videogame *Clockwork Knight*? I am interested in it – if it exists could you tell me the number of the magazine? I have a few – maybe I have the issue and didn't find it…

Fernando Cabrera

We haven't covered Sega's short-lived platform series yet, though

> **"The system's 20th anniversary is just around the corner"**

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

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Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

it does get a brief mention in this issue's Saturn feature. We'll have to get to work on tracking down some developers, it seems!

THE RG CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

Please, please, please can we have a Christmas-themed cover for the Christmas edition of **Retro Gamer** this year? I love Christmas covers and you haven't done one since issue 97 so I think we are due one by now, don't you?

Michael Winn

Now there's a tradition that has fallen by the wayside a bit. We can't make any promises with regard to the cover itself, but we will at least remember to put our hats on this year…



THEY'D BE SNICKERS MEN NOW

Hi **RG**,

I've just gotten around to reading the Marathon Men feature in issue 131 and I wanted to say how much I loved it. I always thought that people were just really determined, and never considered that they might have physical aids like third kidneys too. It was also one of the funniest articles I've read in a long time, so thanks for that.

But that brings me to a bigger point. I love reading about games and how they were made, but for me retro gaming is just as much about the people involved. So keep doing marathon gamers and high score records, but go a bit further – there are a lot of people out there doing things like YouTube videos where they show off collections and talk about old games, or making remixes of classic gaming music. If you can get more of this kind of stuff into the magazine, I'd be a happy man.

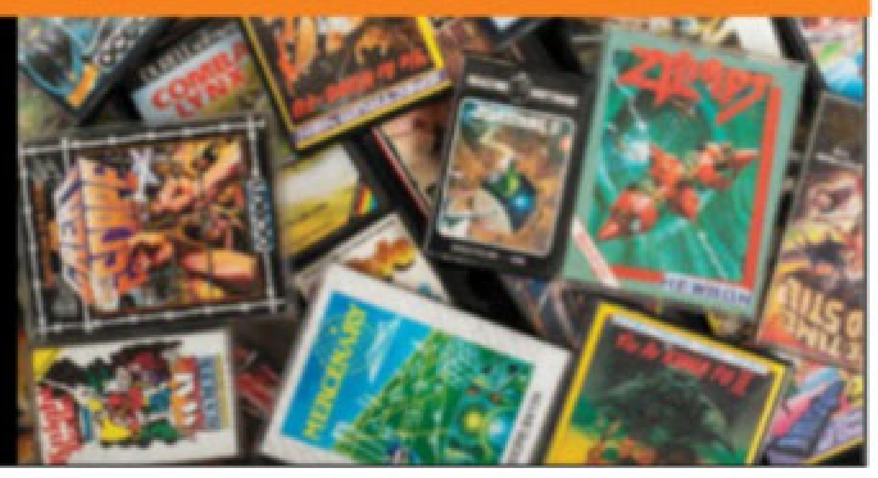
Charles Rimer

Thanks a lot Charles, we're really glad that you enjoyed the feature. You've actually hit on something that we wanted to start doing more of in the magazine in the future, which is taking a better stance on community involvement. By now, you'll have seen the feature on collectors in this issue and the return of Collectors Corner, which gives you an indication of where we're going. We'll still be 100 per cent focused on the games above all else, as they're what unite us, but it's really important to recognise gamers as well as the games we play.

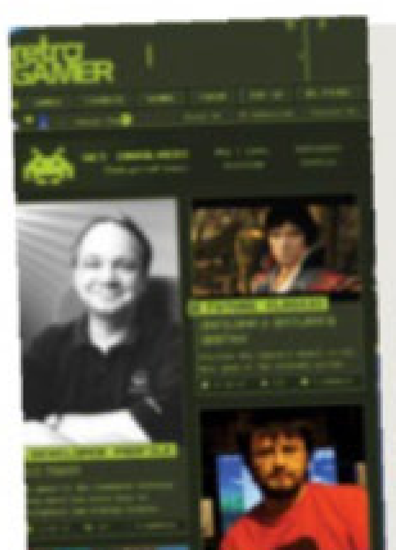
DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Retro regrets

Having read Graeme Mason's feature on collectors, the topic on our minds has been games we wish we still had. Steve is inexplicably missing his boxed copy of *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, Darran regretted getting rid of *X-Multiply* after seeing a video of it and Nick, for some odd reason, wants *Spider*.







From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

Your favourite Saturn game

Megamixer
Fighters Megamix is my own favourite Saturn game. I really enjoyed *Fighting Vipers* so I was utterly blown away by this crossover and the amount of unlockables/ bizarre characters.

markopoloman
Saturn Bomberman. Ten players at the same time is just AWESOME! I've got a Saturn – but not that game, so really must hunt it down with all the bits n bobs for a mass multiplayer battle with my rather large family!

The Laird
I am so torn between *Sega Rally* and *Guardian Heroes*, it actually hurts to choose! But I am going to go with *Sega Rally*, it has the best physics of any joypad driven driving game and just never gets boring. Arcade port perfection.

ianpmarks
Sega Rally all the way. Bought a Saturn the other year almost purely to play this game. I wasn't disappointed.

RodimusPrime
Boring and predictable, but it's *Sega Rally* for me.

Rossi46
Panzer Dragoon Zwei. Way ahead of its time and with stunning graphics, it was astounding.

Antiriad 2097
I think I'll have to go with *Virtua Cop 2*, since there's not much I like on the Saturn that can't be had elsewhere.

pantal00ns
Guardian Heroes for me. Not a console gamer around this period but played it on a mate's Saturn, almost dragged me away from my PC… almost…

ArchaicKoala
Sonic Jam – It may just be a compilation but with the remixed versions of the original games and the 3D free roaming museum mode make it a stand out title to me.

Treguard
Virtual On. It's giant robots fighting each other with lasers, bombs and swords in an arena, and it comes with a tank controller. What's not to love?

HalcyonDaze00
Virtua Fighter 2, the only Saturn game to make PlayStation owners just a little bit envious.

nakamura
I think the game I have had the most fun with is *Elevator Action Returns*. It's just brilliant and still feels really unique and playable today.

Retro GAMER

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill,
Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.imagine-publishing.co.uk
www.retrogamer.net
www.greatdigitalmags.com

Magazine team

Editor **Darran Jones**
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586237
Editor in Chief **Ryan King**
Senior Designer **Jonathan Wells**
Staff Writer **Nick Thorpe**
Production Editor **Steve Holmes**
Photographer **James Sheppard**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Publishing Director **Aaron Asadi**
Head of Design **Ross Andrews**

Contributors
Mike Bevan, Richard Burton, Martyn Carroll, Paul Davies, Ian Dransfield, Paul Drury, Andrew Fisher, Jason Kelk, Graeme Mason, Ed Smith

Cover Art
© Brianna Blank (Gaming Obsession photo)

Advertising
Digital or printed media packs are available on request
Head of Sales Hang Deretz
☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Account Manager Anthony Godsell
☎ 01202 586420
anthony.godsell@imagine-publishing.co.uk

International
Retro Gamer is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.
Head of International Licensing Cathy Blackman
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licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions
For all subscription enquiries
email retrogamer@servicehelpline.co.uk
☎ (UK) 0844 848 8412
☎ (Overseas) +44 1795 592 872
13 issue subscription UK – £51.90
13 issue subscription Europe – £70
13 issue subscription ROW – £80

Circulation
Head of Circulation Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production
Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders
Group Managing Director Damian Butt
Group Finance & Commercial Director Steven Boyd

Printing & Distribution
Printed by Wyndeham Heron Ltd, Bentalls Complex, Colchester Road, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex, CM9 4NW
☎ 01621 877 777

Distributed in the UK, Eire & Rest of the World by: Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU
☎ 0203 148 3300
www.marketforce.co.uk

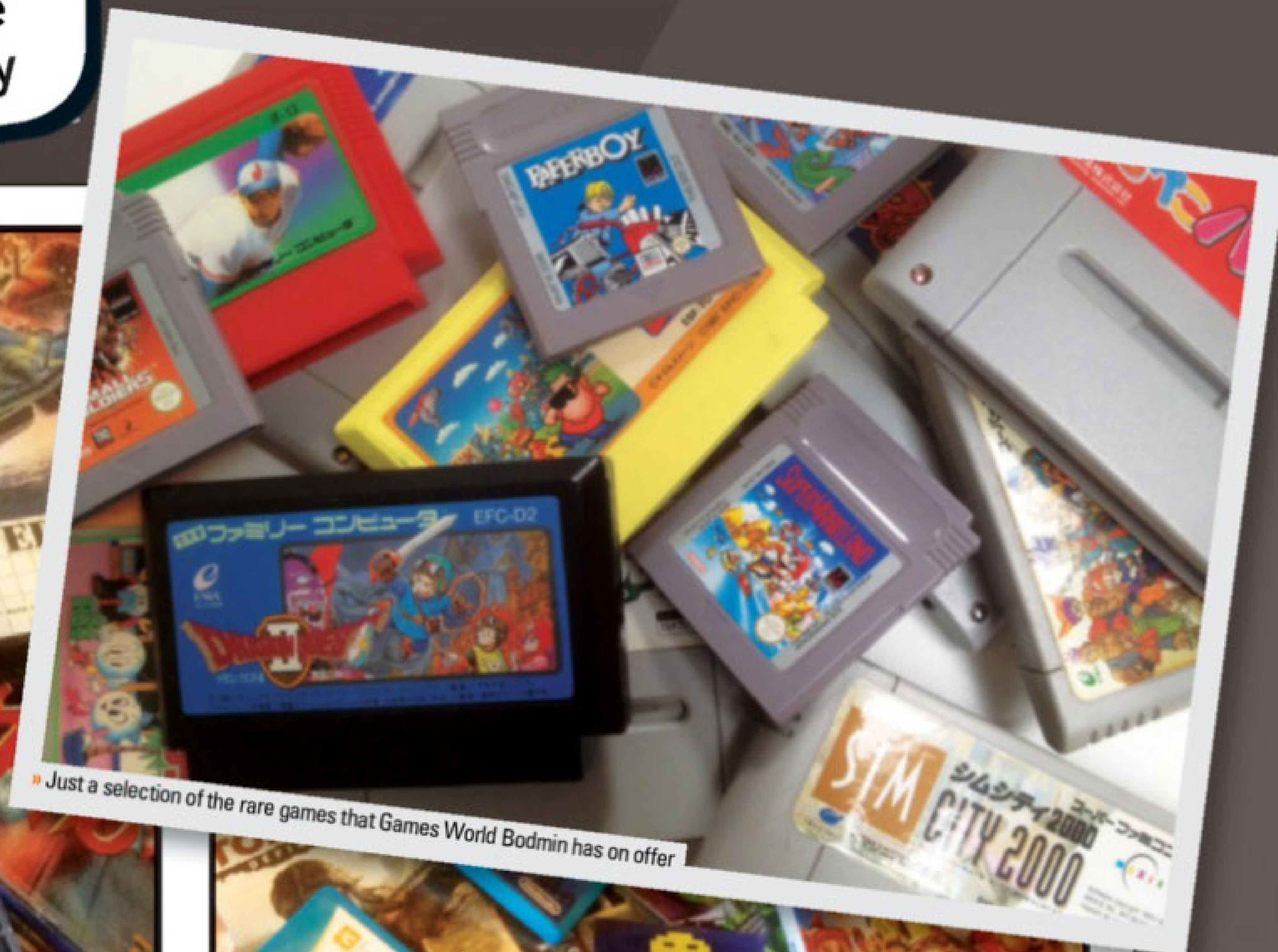
Distributed in Australia by: Network Services (a division of Bauer Media Group), Level 21 Civic Tower, 66-68 Goulburn Street, Sydney, New South Wales 2000, Australia
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TALKING SHOP

One-on-ones with the retro indie community





Just a selection of the rare games that Games World Bodmin has on offer



Visit Adam's store at http://gamesworldbodmin.co.uk/

Games World

This month we speak to Adam Bate about his popular Bodmin-based retro business, which has been running for nine years



Why did you set Games World up?
After being a keen games collector for a number of years I opened my high street store in 2005 after a vacant shop became available in my local town. I was selling online at the time but running the shop and site was proving to be too busy. In 2009 I decided to close my store to allow me to re-launch and concentrate on the website and have never looked back.

How long have you been a gamer and what's your favourite console?
I started gaming on a Sinclair Spectrum that my parents got for me when I was about three – fond memories of playing *Count Duckula* and *Ghostbusters* –0 but I grew up playing on the NES and SNES so I would have to say it's between those two consoles for my favourite. I also have a soft spot for the Saturn.

How hard is it running a retro shop in today's market?
It can be difficult; I like to offer competitive prices for trades but also list my products at the best prices for my customers. The popularity of retro gaming is always growing which changes the prices weekly, keeping on top of the latest trends and ensuring that I have the popular items in stock can sometimes be quite a challenge.

What does Games World offer over other similar shops?
My customers get a service that's second to none, for all my UK customers there's free delivery on all items and cheap international postage. Since all my items are in stock, nine times out of ten if you order a game before 4pm it's shipped the same day and you're playing it the next! I also take requests for those hard to find items that can sometimes prove tricky to find on other sites.



Who needs the Iron Throne?

How do you set your prices? Are sites like eBay a factor to consider?
I try not to look at eBay too much, since the prices on some retro games can fluctuate quite a lot. I know sometimes I have items in stock for up to 12 months at less than half of the average eBay price, so customers will get a bargain and I'm selling for the price I'm happy with.

What items does Games World tend to specialise in?
I have around 3,000 games in stock covering all generations of consoles, I never turn down the chance of a trade in for retro games so I would say that's my specialist area. I will also take modern games and consoles on a trade-in.

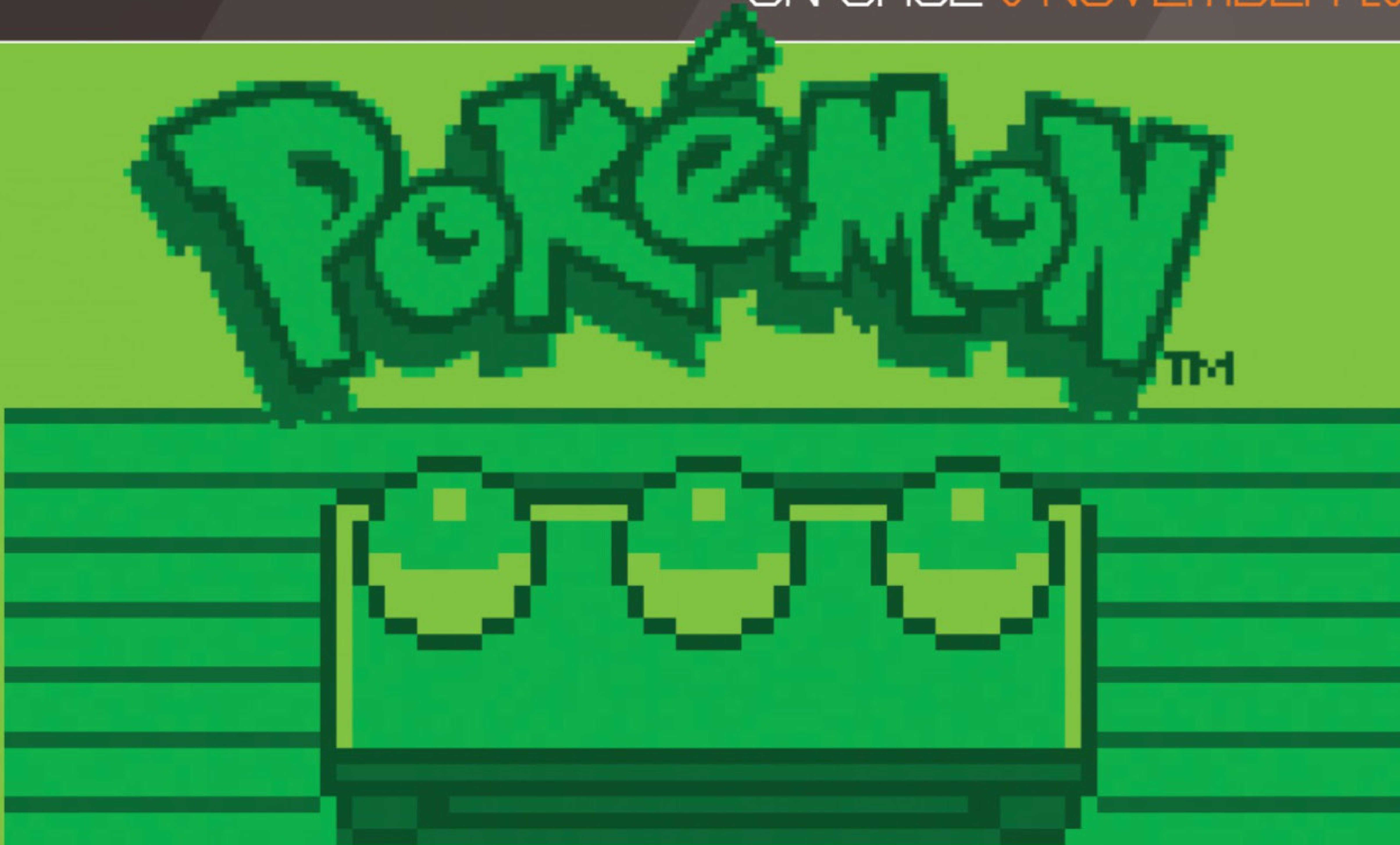
Do you cover anything other than videogames?
I like to keep a massive variety of items on the site, from merchandise and magazines, to trading cards, manga and anime. So with hundreds of interesting extras listed on the site, there's something for everyone! *

retro GAMER

nextmonth

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WE SPEAK TO THE CREATORS OF ONE OF NINTENDO'S BIGGEST FRANCHISES



ALSO INSIDE

Duck Hunt

■ Our latest Ultimate Guide is dedicated to Nintendo's NES hit, currently celebrating its 30th anniversary

The King Of Fighters

■ SNK's most popular brawler is now 20 years old. Nick Thorpe pulls on his gloves and tackles the hardcore series.

TurboGrafx-16

■ NEC's US variant of the PC Engine turns 25 this year, so we look back at the trials and tribulations faced in getting it to market

Exolon

■ We speak to Raffaele Cecco about his popular run-and-gun and discover how he created his epic 8-bit space blaster

• World Of Warcraft • Tommy Tallarico • R-Type • Food Fight • VTech CreatiVision • Rocket Knight Adventures


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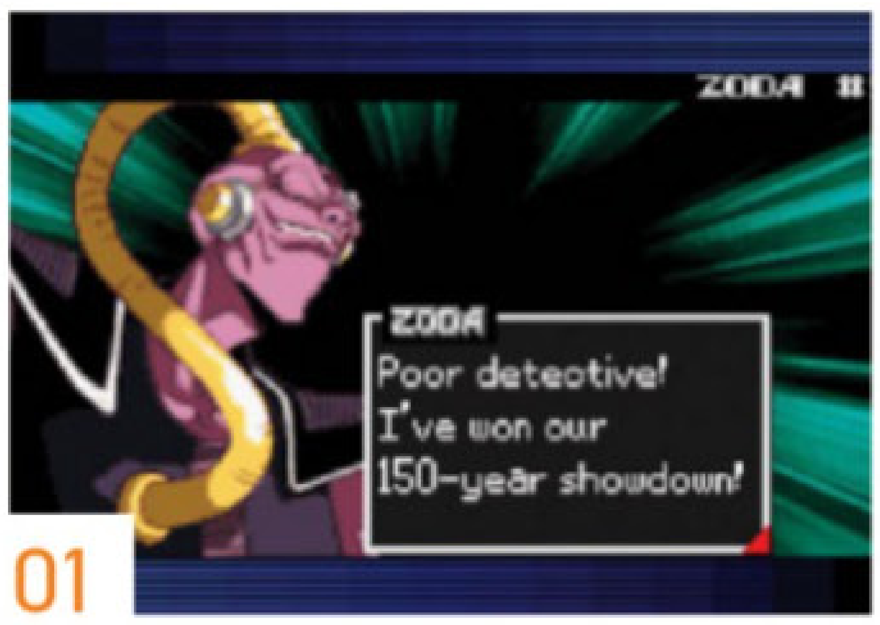

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ENDGAME



F-ZERO: GP LEGEND

» F-Zero never had much of a story in the SNES days, but the early 21st Century saw the series gain a much more developed universe, with F-Zero GX's story mode acting as a precursor to a TV series. The series was then adapted back to the world of videogames, resulting in the GBA title we see here. Let's join criminal Zoda as the race concludes…



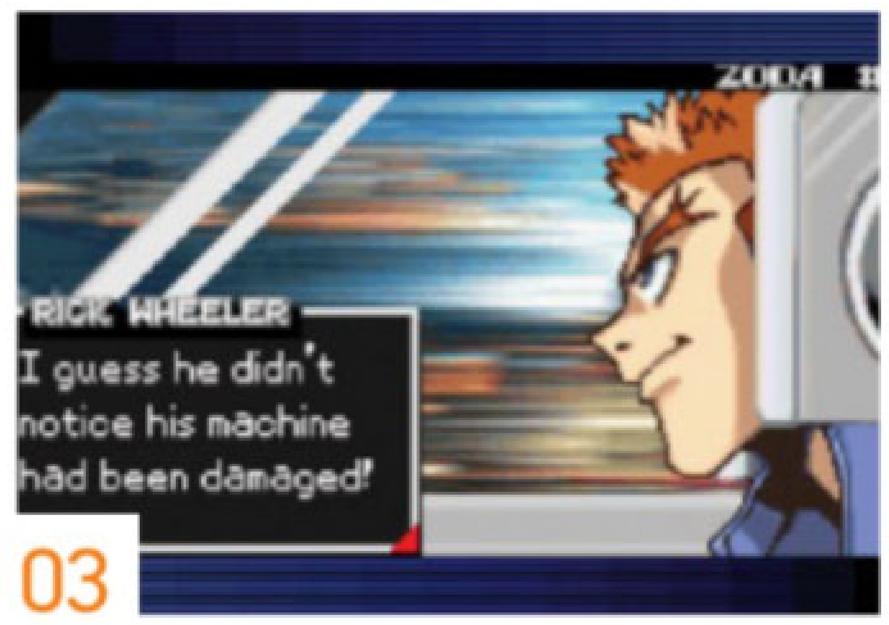
01

» Zoda has finally beaten his nemesis, the detective Rick Wheeler, who he put into stasis in a bad accident 150 years ago. A century and a half hasn't changed anything – the bad guy still comes out on top. But wait…



02

» Suddenly, Zoda's machine bursts into flame! He might have won the race, but it's a moral victory for law enforcement. Unfortunately, you're not on their side – you've been playing as Zoda. It's all a little bit rubbish for you.



03

» Rick notes that in the weird purple alien's zealous pursuit of victory, he didn't notice the damage to his machine, causing the catastrophic breakdown that ended his race. We can't take this; it's like watching *Cool Runnings* all over again.



04

» Things go from bad to worse for poor old Zoda, as *F-Zero*'s arch-villain Black Shadow shows up. Is he gloating over the misfortune of a lesser evil, or simply offering advice to a fellow evildoer? Whatever his intention, he finds time to indulge in his passion for stating the obvious.



05

» It all becomes clear – Black Shadow evidently has plans for Zoda, with his compliance presumably ensuring his continued ability to breathe. It seems that all parties have got what they want out of this. Everyone except you that is, since you're the one who chose to play as Zoda. Sucker!